PZ 7
.E48
P
Copy 1

FT MEADE
GenColl

The Pilgrim Child

THEODORA C. ELMSLIE

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ7 Copyright No.

Shelf F48p

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

He had been sitting thus for the last hour. p. 14.

Frontispiece,

The Pilgrim Child.

BY

THEODORA C. ELMSLIE.

AUTHOR OF

"THE LITTLE LADY OF LAVENDER" "BLACK PUPPY"
"THOSE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES"
etc.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT.
1 1896
CITY OF WASHINGTON

45627-B

THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION
PHILADELPHIA

NEW YORK BRANCH: 111 FIFTH AVENUE
[Copyright, 1896, by the American Sunday-School Union.]

PZ7
.E48
P

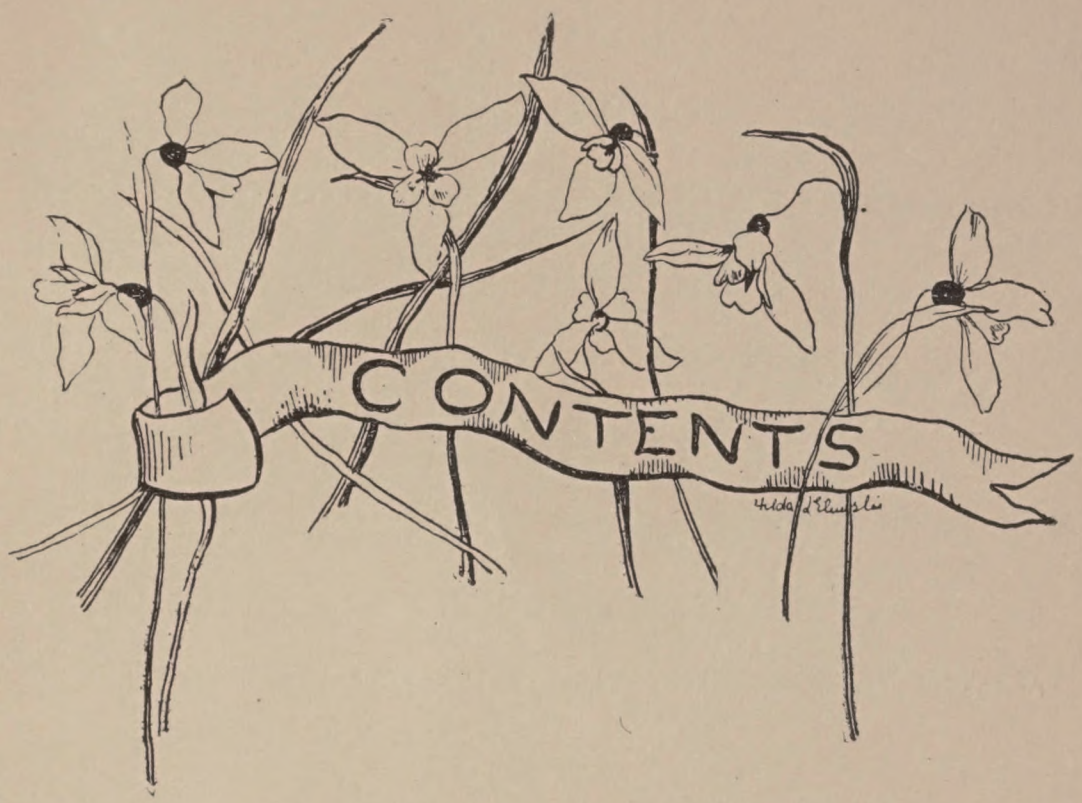
At the closing of the day, the gold is turning grey,
And the workman is a-waiting for the bell;
He has done the best he may, let him put the tools away,
There are others that will handle them as well.
Yet stay!
Hear the greeting of the ending of the way.

Ah! surely we are one, in the march that has begun,
Though some of us and you have gone astray;
King and beggar, one and all, they must answer to the call,
And they travel to the twilight of the day.
Then stay,
And help us to the ending of the way.

Now before the bell is rung, while yet the words are sung,
O listen to the worker's simple lay!
You can gild the sordid life, bring pleasure into strife,
You can point us to the beauty of the day!
God shall say,
That you helped us to the ending of the way.

R. L. Barth.

12-31973



CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE PALACE OF PLEASURE..... 9

CHAPTER II.

AN ANGEL CALLED FAITH..... 29

CHAPTER III.

NARROW IS THE WAY..... 46

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY..... 68

CHAPTER V.

ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS..... 82

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF SUNBEAM..... 100

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

In the Shades of a Quiet Valley..... 115

CHAPTER VIII.

The Hill of Difficulty..... 130

CHAPTER IX.

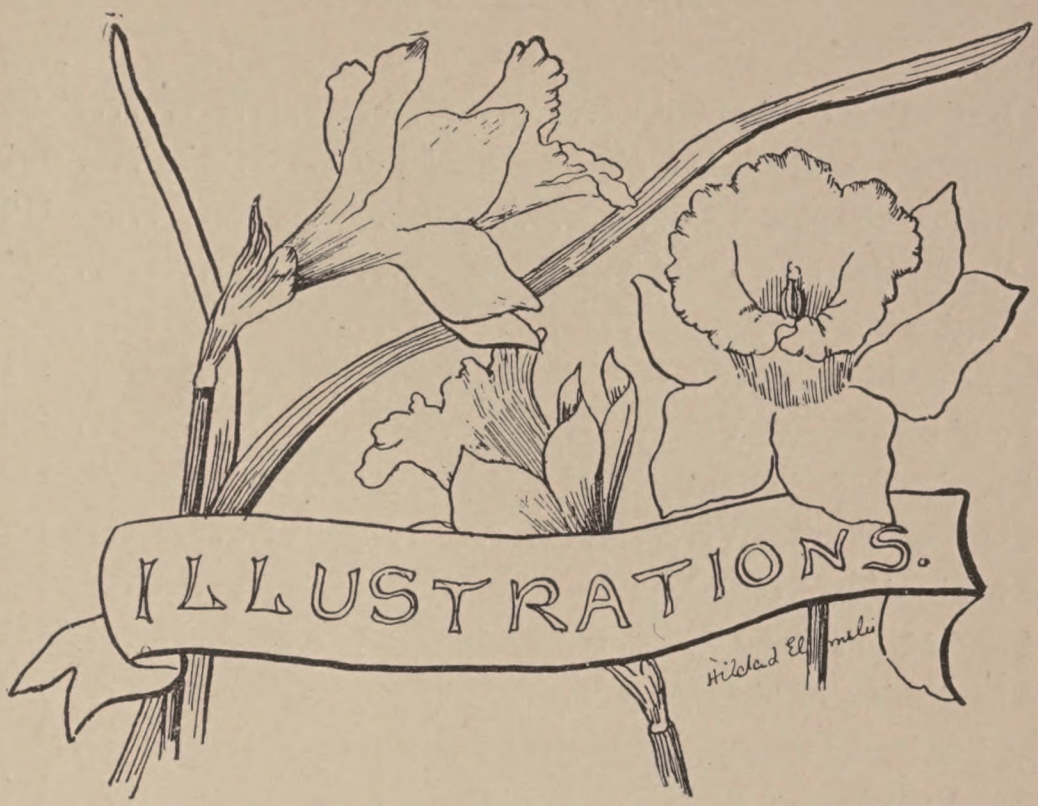
A Cross that Proved a Shield..... 138

CHAPTER X.

A Little Wanderer..... 143

CHAPTER XI.

At the Gates of The City Celestial..... 152



He had been sitting thus for the last hour.....*Frontispiece*

PAGE

Title Page..... 3
Reverse of Title Page..... 4
For Contents..... 5
For Illustrations..... 7
At beginning of Chapter I..... 9
At end of Chapter I..... 28
At beginning of Chapter II..... 29
At end of Chapter II..... 45
At beginning of Chapter III..... 46
At end of Chapter III..... 67
At beginning of Chapter IV..... 68
"Look at me," said Faith, his hand closing upon that of his little charge..... 73
At end of Chapter IV..... 81
At beginning of Chapter V..... 82
At end of Chapter V..... 99

PAGE
At beginning of chapter VI..... 100
"Sunbeam said, 'It is a glad world,'" etc..... 101
At end of chapter VI..... 112
In the Shades of a Quiet Valley..... 114
At beginning of chapter VII..... 115
She drew him to her and kissed him..... 121
At end of chapter VII..... 129
At beginning of chapter VIII..... 130
At end of chapter VIII..... 137
At beginning of chapter IX..... 138
At end of chapter IX..... 142
At beginning of chapter X..... 143
The boy broke into yet more bitter weeping..... 146
At end of chapter X..... 151
At beginning of chapter XI..... 152
At end of chapter XI..... 178

CHAPTER I.

THE PALACE OF PLEASURE.

"Sing to the little children
And they will listen well,
Sing grand and holy music
For they can feel it's spell."

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

"O hearts of love! O souls that turn
Like sunflowers to the pure and best!
To you the truth is manifest."

WHITTIER.

ONCE upon a time," as the children quaintly say, "once upon a time," there stood on the summit of a low white cliff, a very grand and beautiful Palace. The Palace which was large and lofty, boasting of many towers, vast halls and endless

galleries, was built entirely of crystal, clear and shining crystal that danced and sparkled and gleamed a myriad gleaming colors in the sunshine. It was like the Palace of some fairy dream.

The white cliff upon which the Palace stood, rose straight as a marble wall from the calm blue waters of a placid sea, whose azure surface was never disturbed by the tossing of angry waves. Quiet as some sheltered lake it lay, and day after day the sun shone upon it, a wondrous golden glamour, and night after night the moon smiled cold and clear above its sleeping waters.

The time was evening, and the sun was sinking fast. The sky was very beautiful, no artist's brush, however skillful, could have reproduced its mellow glory. All the rosy golden west was decked with tiny cloudlets, soft and fleecy, and shaped as are cherub's wings in some old picture of angel figures. There were larger clouds, too, pillar-like in form, grand, solemn clouds voluminous and dove colored, and behind them the infinite azure blue of a clear, quiet sky. It was a beauteous scene, appealing to artistic eye and thoughtful mind.

Over land and sea hung something more than the golden light of evening. A something to be deeply felt but never adequately described, a wondrous charm—even the *Peace* of parting day.

There is no sweeter time in all the twenty-four hours than the soft, mystic hour of sunset. Who is insensible to its charm, who has not felt its *restfulness?* When the work of the day is done, and the tired heart may rest awhile, when the birds seek their quiet nests and the children fall asleep upon their mother's breasts there steals upon the breeze a sense of quiet peace indescribable, then Heaven seems nearer earth than in the din and turmoil of the busy day, and there comes to many a restless spirit a calm such as at daybreak it knew not. There is no sweeter time.

It was such an hour as this. The homely lamp shone from the cotter's lattice, welcoming one weary toiler in Babylon; the light of the little seaside hamlet flickered through the dusk, the waves broke softly one by one upon the sandy shore. Bright beams from the setting sun fell on the untrodden snow, which blushed rosy red

at their magic touch. A hush lay upon the wintry scene, a hush such as only evening knows; all was calm and still.

But in the Palace on the cliff dwelt neither rest nor quietness. Those whose home it was loved none of these things. Their lives were occupied by the pursuit of Pleasure, a keen, never-ending, never satisfied pursuit, and pleasure to them, meant dancing and singing, feasting, revelling, and the like. They were not thoughtful people nor earnest people. In the Palace by the sea there was no time for thought, and earnestness was accounted tiresome and ill-bred. Its occupants lived to amuse and to be amused. They demanded nothing more of themselves or of one another. Amusement was their sum total of existence. Sometimes—nay oftentimes—they found that hard to attain.

On this particular winter's evening the Palace presented a scene of great brilliance. A ball and a banquet were about to be held, and the grand crystal building was crowded with wealthy and gorgeously attired guests. The prince whose noble home this Palace was, a young, rich and

gay prince, was the leader of all the revels and the very host for such an entertainment. The musicians tuned their instruments, and there sounded upon the polished floor the light tap of many heels. Pages daintily dressed in silk and velvet, bore in their hands great golden goblets filled with sparkling wine. Beautiful ladies and nonchalant gay cavaliers passed hither and thither with thoughtless jest and merry repartee. The warm air was heavy with the perfume of rare hothouse flowers. There was a soft, mellow glow of unseen tapers set high in jewelled candlesticks. Every one said this was a most successful entertainment. The prince received with a complacent smile a thousand congratulations upon its magnificent success.

Far away from the brilliant Banqueting Hall, far away from the gayly dressed courtiers and the lights, and the music, and the flowers, was a certain long dusky gallery filled with great pictures in heavy gilt frames. No one had taken the trouble to light the lamps that hung suspended from the painted ceiling, no careful hand had drawn the plush curtains of the windows and

shut out the snowy winter's evening. It was an old and almost unused part of the Palace; its sombre hangings and faded portraits did not suit the humors of the Prince and the gay throng that formed his court. On this winter's evening, the old gallery boasted a single occupant.

Alone and forgotten was one solitary little figure. He was perched high in the deep embrasure of a great window that overlooked the sea, his small slight form, in its sombre, old-fashioned velvet dress, scarcely visible in the fast waning light. He had been sitting thus for the last hour watching the sea of which he was never tired, his busy childish brain filled with a thousand quaint imaginings, his wondering childish eyes absorbing wistfully every detail of the calm, glorious, sunset picture. And now the sun having dropped behind the margin of the ocean leaving no memory but a trail of rosy light over the smooth waters, he still sat on, content to watch for the coming of a certain kind white star—the evening star—which always seemed to smile upon him.

He was quite a little lad, but seven years old,

and he had been lame from his birth. Though often forgetful and careless of, they were not unkind to him, those to whom he belonged, they were even fond of him in a queer sort of way; but the proud childless Prince chafed when he beheld the limping gait and halting movements of the heir apparent, his dead brother's orphan son, and he longed with a longing that was the sole bitterness of his otherwise cloudless life for a son of his own, an heir who should be strong and active and upright—a fit inheritor of this fine kingdom.

Child though he was the little Prince was well aware of his uncle's mortification, and to one who had troubled to observe must have seemed pathetic indeed the wise and thoughtful way in which the boy ever strove to save him from vexation. In his presence he took care to move as little as possible, and by assuming a brightness which he could not always feel, he reassured him as to his health and spirits. Angelo was peculiarly unselfish and thoughtful, his very affliction made him different to other children. Suffering is a wondrous teacher, and when she walks hand in hand with Patience and Purity her lessons meekly

learned are marvellous indeed, and Suffering and Angelo had been companions since first the little lame Prince trod, with faltering baby steps, this rugged earth of ours.

The rosy pathway across the sea faded, disappeared. The great white star shone out in the quiet sky. Only the soft swish of the waves breaking upon the shore beneath the cliff broke the silence.

Suddenly over the snow came a solitary figure. Angelo's quick eyes discerned it immediately. It was a bent figure, an aged infirm figure. It drew nearer laboriously, slowly ; the little Prince saw an old man who bore upon his stooping shoulders a heavy knapsack which seemed too great a burden for his failing strength.

Angelo's big heart was always full of tenderness and pity. Nothing, nobody appealed to it in vain. Like a well-tuned sympathetic instrument, it responded to the lightest touch. Quickly he slipped from the high window seat and made his way with accustomed steps across the now dark Gallery and down the broad oak stairs. A door communicating with the grounds of the Palace

stood open, a chill, snow-laden blast blowing through the entrance. Regardless of lightly shod feet and dainty velvet dress the little lame Prince ran out into the wintry world.

The old man was plodding his way between high hedges of box and yew that were heavily encrusted with snow. His rough worn dress, and sandalled feet proclaimed him of humble rank. Angelo, full of pity, ran up to him with extended hands.

"Let me carry your knapsack," he said, "and please come and rest in my home, for I am sure you are very tired and cold."

The old man did not relax his hold of the burden he bore. Raising his eyes he looked keenly, doubtfully, at the magnificent Palace with its thousand glittering lights. Then he shook his head.

"I thank you kindly, little sir, but this is your home if I mistake not?"

"Yes," said the child, "this is my home—the Palace of Pleasure. And you are very welcome here," he added, with a sweet and courteous gravity that well became him.

"And is this indeed your home, sweet little one?" he asked, as though in sad wonderment as he followed the child into a deserted hall. "*Can* it be?"

"Yes, this is my home, the Palace of Pleasure," Angelo answered simply. "I am the nephew of Prince Worldly Wise. He is very rich and very kind to those who are his friends. If you will let me take you to him, he will give you money and clothes." He held out his hand.

"And you are content to dwell in the Palace of Pleasure?" said the old man slowly.

"It is my home," responded the child in a wondering tone. "And is it not a beautiful home?"

The old man's eagle eyes swept over the tapestried walls, the quaint carvings of antique oak, and the windows of stained glass, with a smile half sad, half stern.

Its beauty is of a very transient order," he said sternly. "The beauty of a short-lived day. Hark ye, little one, yonder edifice is built upon sand. That great cliff that rises so imperially from the sea is but composed of sand. Let a

few years pass, a very few years, and the waves of the mighty sea shall roll over the place where it now stands, and the great west wind shall sing its funeral dirge and those who dwell within it—ah! they shall be seen no more." Then seeing the child's startled face, he added more gently, "But you, we trust, will have left it ere that day; stranger though you are, I recognize shining from your childish eyes, a pure and noble soul. You are meant for better things than a misspent life in the Palace of Pleasure."

He drew from his knapsack a little harp and tuned its well-worn strings with tender fingers, as a mother puts the finishing touches to the toilette of a dearly loved child.

"Listen," he said, looking earnestly, upon the wondering, upturned face of the little Prince. "Listen, and I will sing to you of a home far happier, far more glorious than the Palace of Pleasure."

The old man's voice strong and tuneful rang out through the snowy silence with a strange power and pathos. The child at his side listened with bated breath and eager eyes. It was an old, old story that the minstrel sang, a story the chil-

dren know and love full well. But it was new to little Prince Angelo, new and wonderful and passing sweet. And through it all rang a convincing key-note of truth—of *perfect* truth that appealed most vividly to his trustful, innocent heart.

Ah, it was wonderful, wonderful! He had never heard the like. It was like a message most rare, most beautiful.

"There came a little Child to earth
Long ago;
And the Angels of God proclaimed His birth,
High and low.
Out in the night so calm and still
Their song was heard
For they knew that the Child of Bethlehem's hill
Was Christ the Lord.

"Far away in a goodly land
Fair and bright
Children with crowns of glory stand
Robed in white,
In white more pure than the spotless snow
And their tongues unite
In the psalm which the Angels sang long ago,
On Christmas night.

'They sing how the Lord of that world so fair
A Child was born
And that they might a crown of glory wear,
Wore a crown of thorn ;

And in mortal weakness, in want and pain
Came forth to die,
That the Children of earth might forever reign
With Him on high.

"He hath put on His Kingly apparel now
In that goodly land,
And He leads to where fountains of water flow
That children band.
And for evermore in their robes so fair
And undefiled
Those ransomed children His praise declare
Who was once a Child."

The singing ceased, one chord from the silvery harp and all was silent. The eyes of the old wayfarer met those of the little child.

"Oh sing me some more!" said Angelo, earnestly. "It is so very beautiful!"

"If I sang night and day without ceasing, always throughout the ages I could never show you how beautiful that story is, my child."

"Tell me the name of the King, please, the King who came and lived on earth a little Child."

"His name is Jesus," answered the old man reverently. "And He is God, the Lord God Omnipotent. In His Hand are both Heaven and Earth."

"I like best to think of him as a Child," said

the little Prince, thoughtfully. "I shall always think of Him as the little Child who came to earth long ago. It's a nice thought, because as He was once a Child Himself, He knows how children feel—all their troubles and their joys."

"Yes, that was the Infinite Love of our King. He came to earth, and lived as we live—a human life that He might feel with us most fully. He was tempted, troubled, tried. And so His sympathy is real and unbounded. *He knows.* There is great comfort in that thought, little one."

"And where is the goodly land—the land where the children live who have the white robes and the golden crowns? Will you take me there? Is it far?"

"Not far for *you*, little one, I should suppose; nay, it is possible that you may find the road short." The old man as he spoke looked tenderly upon the fragile form and ethereal face of his small companion. "But you must, if you would seek that goodly land, first leave the Palace of Pleasure."

"Will you show me the way? I will go with

you." The soft childish hand was laid confidingly in the rough palm of the old wayfarer.

"Ah! I fain would show you," said the old man regretfully with rather a wistful smile. "But that may not be. My course is almost run, little Prince, soon I must go hence. Your road and mine cannot be together. My way is ending, yours but just beginning. But one will come to you who will guide you, one who is strong and patient and pure. He will hold your hand and will lead you."

"What is his name?" asked the wondering child. "How shall I know him?"

"His name is Faith, and he is never a stranger to the children of the King. He is a very beautiful angel; where he is, no evil may come. Through wildest storm and darkest days he is ever the same, calm, unshaken. You will find him a good friend, little child."

"But tell me, where is this city you speak of? I have never heard of it. Is it far from the Palace of Pleasure, this City?"

The old man smiled at the eager words, the eager look.

"Have you not read of all this in the Bible?"

Angelo shook his head with a puzzled expression. "What is the Bible?—some book? We have not got it in the Palace of Pleasure, my uncle has no book with that name."

"No book with that name!" The old man repeated sadly. "No book with that name!"

He put his hand into his knapsack and drew from it a little much-worn volume.

"Listen," he said, "and I will read to you of the City of the great King, the city where the children with the white robes and the crowns of gold dwell. You will like to hear of the goodly land, little one?"

"Oh yes, indeed," cried the child earnestly. "Pray read of it to me, kind sir." His little upturned eager face was full of interest. Here indeed was one willing to learn. The old man smiled, well content with such a listener, and his thin fingers turned the pages of the little book. He began to read, slowly, distinctly, dwelling upon the words as though he loved their sound.

"That great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; . . . and the city *was* pure gold, like unto clear glass.

And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: . . .

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: . . .

And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. . . .

Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any

more pain: for the former things are passed away. . . .

Here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

. . . He that overcometh shall inherit all things; . . .

I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The old man closed the holy Book. His eyes met the eager, attentive gaze of the child.

"That is the story of the Heavenly City, the new Jerusalem," he said. "You fain would go thither; is it not so, my little one?"

"Oh yes, yes! But the children there have white robes and golden crowns. Who will give me these, and who will show me the way?"

"It is a way never sought in vain. Fear not but you will be guided to it. My child, would you like a Bible of your own in which you could always read the story of the King—of my King and yours?"

"Oh, sir, will you indeed give me one! Ah, I shall be so glad! so glad!" burst from the childish lips.

"This Bible," the old man said, holding it tenderly and looking upon it very lovingly, "this Bible has been my companion through many a long day, many a weary night. It has given me words of warning, words of comfort, words of hope. It has cheered my loneliness and banished my fears. Now I am going to a land where there are no more tears, neither sorrow nor sighing, a land where sin and sickness and death are unknown. Give me your hand, little one, let me place this holy Book in it. I will gladly leave my Bible with you, little Prince. The Palace of Pleasure holds nothing half so precious—jewels and gold

and rank can never compare with it. Read it carefully, thoughtfully, and it will show you the way to the goodly land."

The delighted child, his eager attention fixed upon the volume, stammered out his grateful thanks. His joy was unbounded. His eyes expressed such eloquence as his baby lips could not frame. His little hands trembled as they carefully supported the precious gift.

Presently when he looked up he was alone.

CHAPTER II.

AN ANGEL CALLED FAITH.

" O holy trust ! O endless sense of rest !
Like the beloved John,
To lay his head upon the Saviour's breast,
And thus to journey on ! "

LONGFELLOW.

Christian. " Is this the way to the Celestial City ? "
Shepherd. " You are just in your way ! "

JOHN BUNYAN.

GRADUALLY evening deepened into night, and the snow was falling fast and thick upon hill and dale and low-lying plain, while overhead the sky was dark and lowering with not a star to break its gloom.

But the Palace of Pleasure was a blaze of light and the sound of music and revels rang out from its many portals.

Little Prince Angelo sat in a corner of the great chimney-place in the deserted gallery, poring over a small worn book, a little book with a tattered cover and crumpled leaves, yellow from age and much usage.

The servants had forgotten to attend to the lamps, but the firelight was strong and clear and Angelo's young eyes quick to see. Enraptured, fascinated, the child read on with flushed cheek and eager look, his whole soul absorbed by the wonderful story that burst upon him for the first time in all the fullness of its glory and grace.

He read (and undoubtedly a blessed power unseen guided his selection) of the great King who had left His Throne in Heaven to come down to earth and live the life of a humble little child and die a cruel death that His people might be saved from sin and death, and the wonder of this, the exceeding wonder, overwhelmed him utterly, making him catch his breath with a little sob.

"The King must have loved His people so!" he said aloud. "And He did so much for them—so much. And how they must love Him!"

Great thoughts came surging into his young mind, great thoughts following each other, *treading upon* each other as it were, in their rapid sequence.

"*I* am one of the people He came to save," he mused. "He loved me, *me*—and I am only a little child, very weak, too, and useless. But oh, I will love Him!" His fair face flushed; he clasped his small hands, "I will love Him with all my heart!"

"I wonder how I can get to the City," he said presently. He spoke aloud but there was no one to overhear him, so that was of very little consequence. "I wonder how I can find the way. I *must* go there; it's so beautiful, so very, *very* beautiful. And the King dwells there and I want to see Him so that I can tell Him how grateful I feel. I should like to be with those children with the white robes and the golden harps because they see the King always. How happy they must be!"

When he read of the children whom Jesus blessed, of how He took them in His arms and said, "*Suffer the little children to come unto me,*" great tears filled his earnest eyes.

"I wish I had been on earth then," he said. "It was so sweet for them; I would like to have been one of those children!"

And then came the joyful, hopeful thought,

"But I shall see the King one day—it says so in the Bible, and perhaps—perhaps He will say those wonderful words to me."

The hours sped by and he heeded them not. He was reading the most wonderful book that has ever been printed. It seemed to him as he read with all simplicity and faith, that it was filled with messages for him—for him, *himself;* that the messages were such as suited his own need. Ah! what had guided his childish hand that he might turn these pages so specially suited to his need, he asked himself. The firelight flickered on the small velvet-clad figure, and glinted on the downbent head with its heavy brown curls and the little eager face and the wistful eyes.

The painted people in the great gilt frames looked down on the solitary child, coldly unmoved and indifferent. Embers falling from time to time on the tiled hearth, snatches of music from far away that echoed across the dusty gallery now and again, a distant voice calling or singing, these sounds alone broke the silence.

Best of all he loved the story of The Holy Child—that wonderful story of infinite condescension and love, the story of the greatest sacrifice the world has ever known.

Oh! if he might but see Him—the children's Saviour—if he might but try to thank Him, in some small measure for all that He had done! Where might he find Him who was now no longer The Child of Nazareth, but the King in His glory?

"Where is Thy dwelling place?
Is it in the realms of space,
By Angels and just spirits trod?
Or is it in the bright
And ever burning light
Of the sun's flaming disk that Thou art throned, O God?

Far in the unmeasured, unimagined Heaven,
So distant that its light
Could never reach our sight
Though with the speed of thought for endless ages driven."

Far in the unmeasured, unimagined Heaven! Ah! how might he, a little child, reach that glad land of light and love?

Presently—it was very late—an attendant came to summon him to bed.

"It's long past your bed-time," she said carelessly, "but in truth I forgot you. There are grand doings to-night in the servants' hall, Prince Angelo, as well as in the Banqueting rooms. Why the child's never listening to a word I say to him, he's too deep in his book! What are you reading, Prince?"

"I am reading the beautifullest book that ever was written," said Angelo. And then he closed the old man's Bible and put it into the breast-pocket of his tunic, for he shrank from the idea of irreverent hands touching his priceless treasure.

"Well, well," said the servant, shrugging her shoulders and laughing good-humoredly. "You

always were a queer sort of child full of dreams and fancies, but what you can find in that little old book to please you so, puzzles me, I must say."

Angelo was silent. He was not used to sharing his thoughts with the unsympathetic crowd in which he had lived all his little life. In the Treasure-house of his baby heart were locked many childish thoughts and fancies—dreams if you will—that they little guessed at, these big, clever, grown people with all their wisdom and learning. He was by force of circumstance a self-contained child.

There are amongst us many such children though oftentimes we know it not. The beautiful baby soul of a little child is very shy, very sensitive. Oftentimes a young mind will puzzle over a mystery of its own creating, will ponder on a question of its own raising, when just a word from an older person might dispel the mystery or answer the question. Children know fears and griefs never suspected by those around them. Nothing can prevent this but Trust—full and complete Trust—and when this exists

between mother and child, between teacher and pupil, then all is well for the little one. Self-contained children suffer deeply; they *must.* Men speak of childhood as the happiest time. Perhaps it is. Certainly in some cases it is. But children think more, *feel* more than oftentimes their elders suppose. The mind of a child is in embryo the mind of a man. The impressions, the beliefs of childhood bear their fruit in after life. Fixed ideas are as difficult to uproot as are deeply set plants. Ideas formed in childhood will last a lifetime, nothing will readily eradicate them. And erroneous ideas may only too easily crop up in an innocent, ignorant little mind, ideas of which the older people have no suspicion. Oh well it is for the trustful child whose mother listens with tender patience to all its simple thoughts, its little hopes and fears, who can take its every doubt to her without dreading an impatient rebuff or careless ridicule. True indeed is it, that "*The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.*"

Angelo's aunt was a thoroughly worldly woman, and in all her gay and busy social life

there was no room for the little lame Prince, who was her adopted son. She was not fond of children. She had absolutely no sympathy with them. Angelo had always been left to the care of servants. The Princess, assured that the little one was well clothed and well fed, troubled no further about him. Even had he been strong and active as were other boys, she would have taken but little interest in him; as it was, his infirmity was a source of annoyance to her and she was glad to avoid him.

Angelo was very tired. The excitement of the evening had taxed his small strength not a little. So soon as his head touched the silken pillow he fell asleep.

For some time his slumber was a dreamless one, the deep quiet sleep of exhaustion; but presently there came to him a dream—a dream such as he had never known before—a dream that appeared strangely vivid and real.

It seemed to him that he stood upon a river's edge surrounded by a crowd of many people. The people were one and all very busy; some were buying, some selling, others played games,

or stood in groups laughing and talking with one another. There was dancing and singing, and the booths of those who sold were gayly decorated with ribbons and with flags.

But though the scene was a bright one, the people were not *all* wealthy, not *all* gay. There were beggars there who whined for alms and who cast envious, angry glances at their richer neighbors and robbed them when opportunity afforded; there were other beggars who strove to hide their rags and who shrank back ashamed in their pride and poverty. And there were gorgeously clad men and women, who wanted nothing that money can obtain, who yet were sad and unsatisfied.

Angelo looked from face to face and recognized hunger and weariness and pain in many faces. He listened to the many voices and heard weeping and complaint and anger.

"This is not a happy place," he said aloud. And almost immediately a voice answered him. "No, there is no peace here, for this is the sunless land of those who do not believe in the King. They have naught to make them really glad.

Their world is a cold and joyless one, their future vague and hopeless."

"Poor things!" cried the child. "Poor things! But cannot some one teach them?"

"Those who will not learn cannot be taught."

Amongst the many people stalked a grim, dark figure whom they spoke of fearfully in whispers as "Death," and whose icy touch even the most wretched creature there desperately strove to elude. But it was a grim, relentless figure, and from it none might escape.

The river on the edge of which they all stood was dark and swollen and angry. They never looked at it, these busy people. But there came somehow to Angelo the knowledge that they all must sooner or later cross it, and he must cross it too when his time came. An inexorable judge, whom men called Time, drove them before him like a flock of helpless sheep, and never paused —old man and new born child seemed alike to him. And when Time met Death then the swollen river must be crossed. This was unavoidable.

"What is beyond the river?" Angelo asked,

and the voice that had spoken before immediately answered him, "Eternity."

He did not know the meaning of that long word, but it seemed to his childish mind a very awful word. It impressed him deeply.

He looked up and saw that in the sky which was otherwise dark and lowering, shone one bright white star.

"It is my evening star," he thought. But the same voice that had spoken before said, "It is the star of Bethlehem; it is set there to guide the souls of men to God."

"But they don't see it; they never look up!" cried the child, distressed. "And they are so sad and so poor!"

"They do not look up, because they *will* not," said the voice. And then there floated over the river the song of that reckless multitude:

"Man's little day in haste we spend
And from its burning noontide send
No glance to meet the silent end.

"Bowed to the earth with bitter woe,
Or laughing at some raree show
We flutter idly, to and fro."

The singing died away. The dream faded. And Angelo awoke with tears upon his cheek.

A faint white light was stealing through the half-closed shutters of the old room. It fell upon the quaint tapestry, and the oaken, carpetless floor, and upon the silken hung cot of the little Prince. Angelo knew that day was breaking. For this hour he had often lain waiting through long weary nights when pain had made sleep impossible.

All was still. The Palace of Pleasure was wrapt in slumber. Only the ticking of the great clock in its high case at the farther end of the room, only the soft breaking of the little waves upon the sandy shore broke the silence.

Angelo sat up in his cot, half drowsy still. The memory of his dream was strong upon him. He was full of trouble for those poor, blind, silly people on the river's edge. How was it that they would not look up and see the star—the star that could lead them to God?

A voice called the child by his name, a clear sweet voice, strong and tender.

"Angelo, Angelo!"

"Who calls me?" asked the little Prince, astonished. He looked about him. He had thought himself alone.

And then he saw that he had been mistaken.

By the head of his little cot, stood a beautiful, majestic figure. In all his little life Angelo had never before beheld such a figure. Directly his childish eyes fell upon it, he knew intuitively that it was no ordinary earthly form. It was clad in white robes and about its shining, radiant head was set an aureole of gold, most wonderful to see. Set upon the shoulders were wings, great, strong wings, soft and snowy like the wings of a spotless dove.

But Angelo could see nothing, could think of nothing but the face. Such a beautiful face it was! Holy and true, and infinitely tender, a face to love and trust. When he gazed upon it the child's heart grew very glad. It seemed to him that he had suddenly found a friend for whom he searched, for whom he had longed all through his short life. Joyfully, confidently, he held out his hands to the beautiful figure.

The childish hands were taken and held, the

beautiful figure bent over the childish form, the white wings shadowing it protectingly.

"Little one, the King has sent me to fetch you to the goodly land. I am the children's Guardian Angel—an Angel called Faith."

At his words a feeling of perfect peace stole into the simple heart of Angelo.

"Oh, lead me, guide me," he said, "I will go whither thou wilt."

And then there came the joyful wondering questions. "Has the King indeed sent you; can it be that He thinks of a little child like me?"

The words had scarcely left the baby lips when there came Faith's answer. "The King loves little children; they are the lambs of His fold. It was He who said '*Suffer the little children to come unto me*,' and His Divine Voice full of tenderness and compassion bade His disciples '*Feed my lambs*.'"

"Arise, little one," said the Angel. "Arise and put on this robe I have brought you, the white robe of Innocence, and take my hand and come forth with me. If you would go to the

goodly land wherein the King dwells, you must lose no time in starting."

The little Prince needed no second bidding, waited for no persuasion. He did not doubt, nor question, nor waver. Quickly, joyfully, he obeyed the Angel's bidding. The King had sent for him, the King who loved little children. Oh, it was all too wonderful, too beautiful!

The sun was rising above the margin of the wide blue sea, and the calm waters were glistening and shining beneath its radiant touch when Angelo stepped out from the portals of the Palace of Pleasure.

The Palace looked grand and beautiful in the clear morning light, and the journey upon which Angelo was about to embark lay through ways unexplored, unknown, ways that would perchance be hard and difficult.

Older folk, accounted of men wiser and more learned, might have paused on the threshold of this new life, overcome by doubts and fears, and feeling that they were abandoning the certain for the uncertain. But there was no faintest shadow of doubt or fear in this baby heart. With a

happy look, indescribable upon his beautiful, trustful face, with a new glad light in his blue eyes, the little child set forth on his quest for the goodly Land where dwells the children's King. For at his side walked an Angel called Faith.

CHAPTER III.

NARROW IS THE WAY.

"This world is but a rugged road
Which leads us to the bright abode
Of peace above :
So let us choose that narrow way,
Which leads no traveller's foot astray
From realms of love."

(Translated by LONGFELLOW.)

THE winter's snow lay dense and thick upon the earth, and the winter's wind blew shrilly through the bare branches of the trees when little Prince Angelo set forth on his journey. But the eager

child did not feel the cold and he stepped out boldly, his little confiding hand clinging to that of Faith, his eyes upturned to the clear blue sky above him.

"I am going to the goodly land; I am going to the city of the King!" That was his one glad thought.

And Faith answering the unspoken words told him, "The path by which you must go is the same path the Holy Child trod—the stones over which you will stumble are the same stones that bruised His sacred feet."

It seemed to Angelo that they had been walking for some time when they came to a certain wicket gate, beyond which lay a rough and narrow road across a wild and treeless plain. Over the gate were inscribed these words:

> "This is the gate of the Lord;
> The righteous shall enter into it."

Towards this open portal, Faith led the little Prince. Angelo drew back startled.

"Why should we go this way?" he asked. "It is not a pleasant way. Look there—over yonder! See, that is a brighter road. The way

is wide; there are flowers growing about it and I can hear birds singing. The stones have all been swept from the path which is smooth and level. Let us take that way, dear Angel."

And at that moment some children, richly-dressed, handsome, brilliant children, called laughingly to him from the brighter way.

"Come and join us," they said. "You will be very happy if you will, gay and rich and careless. Don't go through that gate, the path beyond it is very rough, and there is no sunshine to lighten the gloom. Come with us, little Prince."

But Faith, still keeping close the little fragile hand said: "That way is not for the children of the King, my child, it is the Path of Pleasure, and those who tread it are dead while they live. Come you through this wicket gate on to the narrow road, for by this road alone can you reach the Celestial City. And it is indeed a joyous way for 'The servants of the King will sing for joy of heart.'"

So with a slight sigh and one backward glance at what seemed at the outset the fairer way, An-

gelo obeyed the bidding of his Guardian Angel, and he passed through the little gate. He could hear the mocking laughter of the children on the Path of Pleasure and his face flushed, and he shrank within himself sensitively, like some gentle wounded bird. For a few moments his head drooped upon his breast, his eyes were downcast. Then suddenly he looked up at Faith and smiled.

"This is the path the Christ Child trod, when he lived here below with Mary and with Joseph. It is the Narrow Way in which all must follow who would attain to the heavenly country," he said.

Even as he spoke there came a change upon the scene. The gloomy gray mist lifted, the sun shone out bright and clear, and sweet bird voices flooded the silence with perfect melody. It seemed that in a moment winter had fled and spring was come. Beneath the child's faltering feet, there sprang up, in place of the rough stones, the sweetest wild flowers he had ever beheld.

"Yes, stoop to pluck them," said Faith, gently; "they are the flowers of Hope and Love. The King has planted them in your path. He

never forgets His own, He wishes His children to be very happy."

Presently Angelo paused, his little hands filled with the fragrant flowers.

"Oh!" he cried, amazed. "It is wonderful, so wonderful! I can understand what the birds say, I know the meaning of their song. I never knew it before."

"And what is the meaning?"

"It is '*God is love,*'" said the child, softly, "They keep singing that over and over again! 'Tis always the same '*God is love.*'"

"Never close your ears to that song, little child," said Faith. "Believe it always—always."

> "One unquestioned text we read
> All doubt beyond, all fear above,
> Nor crackling pile nor cursing creed
> Can burn or blot it: 'God is Love.'"

The way grew rougher presently, the sky darker. The flowers and the birds were left behind. But still the baby hands of Angelo clasped the precious blossoms of Hope and Love, and often when he grew weary their fragrance cheered and comforted him. And the birds'

song! The memory of it never left him. "*God is love.*" Oh glad, oh gracious message! Surely no sweeter tidings ever fell on mortal ears. Happy birds! A glorious pæan theirs.

Presently Angelo found himself no longer alone with Faith. Others trod with him the Narrow Way, others—a multitude whom he could not number! One by one they pressed on. There were many of them, yet each one was alone, a solitary figure, so it seemed to Angelo. And though by each several pilgrim walked his Guardian Angel, many a one there seemed totally unaware of the sweet presence overshadowing him.

"I wonder the Guardian Angels do not grow weary of their charges," thought Angelo. "It must be hard for them to care for people who never seem to see nor hear them. What patient Angels they must be!"

Faith answered his thought at once.

"Patient and long-suffering," he said. "And very pitiful. They stay with their charges to the end. It is the King's command."

Among the pilgrims were people of all ages

and temperaments. Old people whose trembling feet seemed scarce able to carry them, and who leaned heavily each upon his staff. Young people bright, confident, full of life. Little, eager, trustful children, their faces upturned to the clear, blue sky, their young hearts full of confidence and love. Clever people, stupid people, weak, wavering folk of fearful heart and faltering steps. Brave, sweet pilgrims with ready hands held out to help the feeble and the aged pilgrims, with wide and tender sympathies for those who were less enlightened. The halt, the maimed and the blind, were there, and some —a great number—who had trodden the Path of Pleasure to find sorrow and sin, and whose Guardian Angels had led them at last on to the better path that was called the Narrow Way. And these last were very humble, for they could never forget the bitter past.

They were all bound for the same destination. To reach the Celestial City was the hope of every heart. Some had far to go; for others the way was short. Each individual person there was the child of the King, and each was equally dear

to Him. He never forgot one of them—not even the humblest and the weakest. He had laid down His blameless human life to save their sinful human souls, and He was waiting for them in the Holy City where the Narrow Way ended.

Faith told all this to Angelo and the child heard him full trustfully.

"It is no wonder," he said, gravely, "that the birds sang '*God is love!*'"

A strange voice addressed the little Prince.

"You are very young to tread the narrow way alone," it said. "Are you not afraid?"

Angelo looked up and met the earnest gaze of a young lad of some eighteen summers, a tall, strong fellow, whose very strength gave him compassion for the evident weakness of the fragile child who was his fellow-traveller.

"Are you not afraid?" he repeated, kindly.

Angelo smiled.

"I am not alone," he said, smilingly. "Faith is with me always; he never leaves me."

"I don't see him," the lad remarked, doubtfully. "He is not visible to me."

"I can't understand that," said Angelo, won-

deringly, "for I can see his face plainly, I can feel his hand holding mine now."

"That is because you are very young and innocent," the lad said. "I have often been told that Faith is the Guardian Angel of innocent little children. He will leave you when you grow an older boy. This is a sceptical age. The life of a Christian pilgrim is full of doubts and fears." He spoke sadly, wistfully. "This Narrow Way is a rough road—very rough," he added, almost passionately.

"I shall ask Faith to stay with me always," said little Angelo, confidently.

"Ah! When Innocence goes you will find Faith will go too," cried the lad with great bitterness.

"Why should Innocence go?" asked the child, perplexed.

"Why should Innocence go! A question indeed. Ask it of me again later on, child, later on when you have trodden much further this path of life. But no, you will not ask, for you will have the answer in your heart." He turned away with a mirthless laugh.

"He has shaken hands with Doubt, and she has laid a mist upon his eyes, so that he may not see his Guardian Angel," said Faith, sadly. "If he beware not she will drive him from the Narrow Way. He has already wandered more than once—hence his lost innocence. See! even now his eyes are fixed on the Path of Pleasure."

The Path of Pleasure ran parallel with the Narrow Way, and presented a striking contrast to that rugged road. Sometimes when the pilgrims grew disheartened they would gaze upon it with wistful, envious eyes, and their steps would falter—now and again stop short.

The lad who had spoken to Angelo was in a dangerous mood when his restless gaze fell on that flowery way, so smooth, so sunny. The sound of music and revelry fell upon his ears.

"How can we guess the end of either path!" he exclaimed, recklessly. "Both ends are hidden. 'Twere better surely to grasp the pleasure of the moment. This is the truest philosophy." He sprang forward; he was about to leave the Narrow Way.

Angelo was at his side in a moment, and caught his hand in his.

"Will you walk with me awhile?" he pleaded, gently. "I fain would have your company. And maybe when we walk together Faith, who leads me, will come back to you."

His eager voice, his upturned, earnest face, above all his childish presence, touched some chord in the heart of the wavering lad.

"Yes, I will go with you," he said, impulsively. And he put his big strong hand into the little weak hand. And together they turned back into the strait and Narrow Way.

The Guardian Angels smiled when they beheld the innocent conquest. It was Faith that whispered: "*And a little child shall lead them.*" And the flowers of Hope and Love threw forth their sweetest fragrance on the gentle breeze.

"What is your name?" Angelo asked his new friend.

"My name is Youth," answered the lad. "My father Age says I am a silly fellow and too easily led. But I feel sure I shall not regret going

with you, little one. There is a happier feeling in my heart already."

"Look to your right," whispered Angelo's Guardian Angel, "there is one there who surely needs a cheering word."

And the child obeying beheld the tottering form of a very old woman. She was so old that her shuffling feet seemed scarce able to support her. Her dim eyes wore a strained and anxious expression. She clasped her pilgrim's staff with a bony, trembling hand.

"Will you not lean upon me?" said Angelo, very sweetly. "I am little, but my shoulder is strong. Please put your hand upon it."

Gently he took the old hand and placed it upon his arm.

"Thank you, my dear," said the old woman. "I cannot see you, for I am blind. But your young voice is very kind. It is good to hear such a voice as yours.

"I have come a long way, dear child," she went on in her quavering, uncertain voice. "It is full four score years since first I trod this Narrow Way. And day after day I pray our King

that He may see fit to take me home. I cannot tell you how my weary old heart longs for the Celestial City. When I pass through the Golden Gates, little one, I shall be old and feeble no longer. These faltering steps will grow strong and firm once more, these blind eyes will see—yes, see the King in His Beauty! The way cannot be much longer for me, I think?" she concluded, wistfully. Then Faith spoke.

"It is well nigh ended," he said in his strong and loving voice. "But a little more love, a little more trust and patience and *he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*'"

"Ah blessed, blessed words!" cried the old pilgrim. And her blind eyes filled with tears of joy.

"And you will lean on me," pleaded Angelo, eagerly. "Oh pray do. I know I'm only little, but I am a pilgrim on the same road, and while you are here we may walk together, may we not?"

"Dear little one! May such loving hands tend you, such gentle speech fall upon your ears

when you are old and feeble. Ah! I doubt not but our King has sent you to cheer me."

When night came, the dark and chilly winter's night, the pilgrims laid them down to rest. A rough stone was the pillow of little Prince Angelo and the canopy of his couch was the sapphire starlit vault of Heaven. But Faith whispered to him that the King sends a special guard of holy angels to watch over his sleeping servants, and so without any feeling of fear, he closed his eyes and fell asleep.

When morning dawned, and he awoke refreshed, his old companion of the previous day was no longer at his side. While the pilgrims slept, one had been among them—the King's messenger—and had very gently taken the weary wayfarer to her rest. Angelo was glad, for he knew how she had longed to go. He reflected joyfully that she was blind no longer. She could see the birds and the flowers in the King's garden, and the sunny faces of the white-robed children with the golden harps. Her eyes were bright, and clear, and shining as the untried eyes of happy youth!

"She is no longer old and weak and tired," he thought. "That is all over forever. Forever!" He repeated the words softly, wonderingly, beneath his breath.

"Arise, little one, and pursue your road, you have yet some way to go," whispered Faith. And obedient to the call, Angelo followed the other pilgrims, as, rested and refreshed, they resumed their journey.

The day's march lay through a sandy desert, upon whose treeless waste the sun beat down with pitiless force. The short grass all dried up and withered, burnt the pilgrim's lightly-shod feet; there was no grateful stream of water at which they might quench their painful thirst, no wide, green tree beneath whose shade they might rest awhile. It was a very weary way.

As the long hours passed by and still there came no change in the scene, the hearts of some of the pilgrims began to fail them. Those who were weak and timid, fell fainting to the ground. Renewed doubt clouded the hearts of many, whose eyes had never beheld the Angel Faith. Sullen and angry they paused by the wayside.

Some there were who even turned back. "We are not going to be brought into a desert to die," these said. Rebellion, Discontent, and Fear stalked rampant among the little band.

"You will not turn back?" Faith asked Angelo, with his beautiful smile, sure of the answer he would receive.

"Never while you are with me," said the child. And as he spoke the hard scorching ground beneath his feet grew softer, cooler, and a welcome cloud shielded his little head from the burning rays of the dazzling sun.

There was among the pilgrims one whom Angelo had learned to love. A certain beautiful white-robed figure that attracted irresistibly his innocent childish heart.

Sometimes she looked at him and smiled—a smile of the eyes rather than of the lips, for hers was a sweet gravity, and the dimple rarely rippled on her cheek. And when she smiled Angelo smiled back. And so, though no words were exchanged, there seemed a bond of sympathy betwixt these two. However hard might be the way, this white-robed figure pursued an unwavering

course. Her feet never faltered, her hand never trembled.

Nothing succeeded in turning her.

Her motto was:

"*To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield!*"

To the best of her ability—a human ability that yet for one moment never stood alone because it was aided—sustained by a Power beyond the comprehension of the human heart—she lived up to this. Certainly, she always kept it before her, she never lost sight of it. Sometimes her weary feet stumbled, her tired heart grew faint. . . . But still she pressed on.

The little Prince was glad to gaze upon her calm eyes and placid brow. It was like looking at a very beautiful picture, or reading an exquisite poem. Her personality charmed his dainty, childish fancy. It was a rare sweet personality, noble, pure, patient. It set her apart from the other pilgrims in his baby mind, gave her a special place of her own in his child-heart, a special place where he kept all his most precious treasures, guarding them jealously from the

knowledge of those who thought they knew him best.

He marvelled as he saw her self-forgetting, self-renouncing life, marvelled at her patience with wilful pilgrims, at her tenderness for those who were sinful and fallen.

When at the sight of some poor soul that had gone out of the way, the self-satisfied pilgrims ostentatiously drew aside their robes as though fearful of contamination, and passed on by the other side, she went not with the others, but stayed with that erring one: an infinitely pitiful presence. The pharisaical cant, the cruel contempt of those who accounted themselves "*without sin*" found no echo in her pure heart. Hers was a very gentle mission:

> "Raising the lowly,
> Cheering the sad,
> Finding some goodness
> Even in the bad."

She never seemed to think of herself, for one moment. All her life was devoted to the lives of others—merged in theirs, as it were. When the road was rough, she knelt to bind up the

bruised and bleeding feet of her fellow-travellers, without so much as a thought for her own pain. When the way grew steep and dangerous, she stretched out a cool, firm hand to meet the feverish grasp of one less confident. Often she turned without a murmur, and went back miles and miles down the toilsome road, in search of some faint-hearted soul that had fallen by the way. She was always patient, always gentle. "Perhaps she is an Angel," thought the little Prince.

"She is no Angel," said Faith. "She is only a woman—one of the daughters of the King. She is very pure and noble, and she wears such a spotless dress that the other pilgrims marvelling call her The White Lady. Her soul is as white as her dress. She has washed both in the Fountain of Living Water. Speak to her, little one, if you will. She often needs a word of love that not one of those she helps will trouble to pronounce. They are so selfish in their joys and their sorrows, these her fellow-pilgrims. They never think of her, except as one who may be of use to them and who, when she has served their purpose, need be considered no more. Love is

very sweet to every human heart, little Angelo. And even the bravest and the best need sometimes a word of sympathy and encouragement. Speak lovingly to her, and she will gladly listen.

"But I am only a child," urged the little Prince, timidly. "And she is so strong and wise and brave; I don't like to speak!" He turned away with a shy gesture.

"I will give you a message for her," said Faith. "You may tell her that to such as she are spoken the glorious words '*Well done, good and faithful servant.*' She will gladly hear that message. It will encourage and help her not a little."

"Oh, will it, indeed?" cried the child. "Then I will joyfully speak it." He went to the side of the gracious white-robed figure and put his hand into hers.

"Dear White Lady," he said in his clear, childish voice, "Faith bids me tell you, that to such as you are spoken the blessed words: '*Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*'"

She started at his touch, her quiet face flushed,

and a wonderful light came into her beautiful calm eyes.

"Oh!" she cried, with a catch in her breath, "what a glorious message! Can it really be for me?"

Angelo nodded his little head wisely.

"Yes, it is for you," he said simply.

She knelt down upon the dusty path and put her arm about him and kissed him.

"Dear little child," she said in a low agitated voice. "You don't know—you *cannot* know what joy you have brought me!"

"I am so glad," responded Angelo. "But you looked happy and calm, I did not think you wanted joy." His tone expressed surprise that was almost wonder.

"Yes, I am calm," she answered him thoughtfully. "Calm—and—and I suppose happy. I have consecrated my life—my poor worthless life such as it is—to the service of the King. I am working day after day in His vineyard—a wearied and unprofitable servant! I strive—indeed I strive hour by hour to do good to those who are dear to Him—His pilgrims. Indeed this

is the one aim and object of my life! But sometimes, when I see the sin and the sorrows around me and feel how powerless I am—how powerless *any* human being is to avert it, my heart grows faint and my feet weary. And the suffering, the intense, the awful suffering of the world! Little child, your innocent mind cannot imagine, cannot possibly fathom it! To me, it seems dreadful—*dreadful.* There is no mystery so great as misery!"

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY.

"Look up and on, believing still
That through the seeming mists of ill
God's sun of love shall shine at last
And clear the shadows from the past!"

CATHERINE MACREADY.

HER passionate words rang out sharply on the still air. Angelo, half puzzled, half alarmed, looked up at her shining, earnest eyes and tremulous mouth.

It was strange to see her thus distressed, she who was always so strong, so calm. Could this indeed be the gracious, radiant being who walked among the other pilgrims as one of a nobler birth, of whom he had questioned, "Can this be an Angel?" His heart sank within him. How should he—he who was only a weak little child comfort her? He had not the power, although the will was his.

Timidly he stretched out his small hand, and stroked her down-bent, beautiful head. There were tears on his cheek, and it seemed that silence had set her seal upon him.

"Speak to her," whispered Faith. "I will teach you what to say."

And even as the voice of his Guardian Angel sounded in his ears, a great tenderness filled the innocent heart of the little Prince, a great tenderness and a wondrous knowledge and ready words sprang to his lips.

"We shall never understand that mystery here—in this world," he said. And it did not seem to him that he himself was speaking, but rather some unseen power of wisdom that sud-

denly possessed him. "The mystery of misery cannot be solved '*Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.*' When our feet tread the courts of the City Celestial we shall know all—*all*, but never until then. If we strive to know we shall only find grief and pain, never true knowledge. The King does not intend that we shall know. You would not rebel against His loving decision? '*Through a glass darkly*,' that is how we see here. Through much tribulation must we enter into the kingdom of God. That is the only *earthly* answer to the mystery of misery. But here is one who shall guide you —even Faith. His lantern may illumine the darkest road that human feet ever trod. He can lead when every other hope fails. Faith, Faith, he is the best servant of the King. If you ask his guidance he will abide with you until at the portals of the City not made of hands, you need him no more!

"'Look up and on, believing still
That through the seeming mists of ill
God's sun of love shall shine at last
And chase the shadows from the past.'"

She lifted her head and looked at him very earnestly. There were tears in her beautiful eyes, but through them shone a softer and more hopeful light.

"Dear little child," she said, "you speak the truth, I can feel that here—in my heart." She laid her hand upon her breast. "You are the King's messenger!"

The King's messenger! Oh what a glorious name! The baby cheek flushed, the little hands trembled. The King's messenger! Could he indeed—he, a little weakly child—claim that blessed title?

At that moment there fell upon the silence a great and terrible noise, as of the roaring of wild beasts, and at once ensued a panic indescribable among the affrighted pilgrims.

"The wild beasts are upon us," they cried. "The wild beasts of the Prince of Darkness. See them come! Temptation, Vice, Despair, Death in Life, they are all there. And many besides, a myriad cruel, relentless foes!"

The cries of the terrified multitude recalled Angelo's companion to herself, and once more

she became the calm, quiet White Lady he knew. With reassuring words, with cool firm hands, and above all by her own courage and presence of mind, she reassured those about her. Instead of a passionate, pleading woman asking for light, Angelo beheld a ministering Angel who had thought and tenderness for all but herself.

The terrible noise came nearer and was almost deafening. It seemed indeed as though a herd of wild beasts had been suddenly driven into the midst of the trembling pilgrim band.

"Look at me," said Faith, his hand closing upon that of his little charge. "Look at me always and glance neither to the right nor the left. So shall you go on your way unharmed."

And Angelo thought of a story he had read in his precious Bible, the story of Daniel, and how God sent His Angel and closed the lion's mouth, that they might not harm His faithful servant.

No fear—no shadow of fear—touched the heart of the little child.

"Faith will keep me," he thought, trustfully. "I am safe with Faith."

"Look at me," said Faith, his hand closing upon that of his little charge.

p. 72.

And softly upon the breeze came the verse of a sweet old hymn:

> "Change is our portion here:
> Yet, midst our changing lot,
> Midst withering flowers and tempest drear
> There is that changes not:
> Unchangeable Jehovah's word.
> 'I will be with thee,' saith the Lord."

"Oh," cried a shuddering voice in the boy's ear; "oh, they will have us—they will have us! Such awful monsters! Ravenous, bloodthirsty, terrific, it is beyond the power of poor mortals to escape them!"

"Do not be afraid," said the little Prince, his eyes firmly fixed upon the calm face of his Guardian Angel. "They cannot harm you if you press forward looking neither to right nor left." As he spoke, he held out his little hand groping unseeingly for that of the other pilgrim.

The childish hand was seized in a feverish grasp and some one—he might not then turn his head to see who it was—paced the Narrow Way at his side.

"My name is Much Afraid," said the trem-

bling voice that had spoken before. "And my terror is so great that my shaking feet can scarce support my frame. Oh, the wild beasts, they are so awful! Are they not indeed most terrible?"

"I cannot see them," Angelo answered. "Faith has bidden me look at him all the time, and turn my eyes neither to the right nor the left. I will hold your hand very close, poor Much Afraid, and Faith will lead us both. Do not fear, you have no need."

"But I have come so far along the Narrow Way, I have passed through so much danger. It will be bitter indeed, if the wild beasts devour me at the last!"

"You would step out more freely but for that heavy burden upon your back," said the gentle voice of Faith. "Cast it from you, poor pilgrim, and never take it up again."

"It is the burden of Doubt," said Much Afraid, in a trembling voice. "It has clung to me all the way, like some poisonous leech. I cannot free myself of it."

"But Faith can free you," said Angelo.

"Is that so?" asked Much Afraid, eagerly.

"Oh, little child, I beg that you will ask him to perform this gracious deed!"

Angelo saw a very sweet and glad smile flood the fair face of Faith, and he knew that he had no need to plead.

"The burden has dropped from your shoulders, Much Afraid," he said joyfully.

"Indeed it has," replied the fearful pilgrim. "And my heart has grown lighter already. Oh, you are good company, little child. I would fain go with you all the way to the Celestial City."

"Keep your garments white and walk carefully in the Narrow Way, and that boon may be yours," said Faith. "And listen to a simple story—the story of a simple shepherd—given in his own words, which you may read for yourself in a good little book rightly called 'Gold Dust.'

"Listen to the story of a simple shepherd, given in his own words:—

"'I forget now who it was that once said to me: "Jean Baptiste, you are very poor?"—True.—"If you fell ill, your wife and children would be destitute?"—True.—And then I felt anxious and uneasy for the rest of the day.

"'At evensong, wiser thoughts came to me, and I said to myself: "Jean Baptiste, for more than thirty years you have lived in the world, you have never possessed anything, yet still you live on, and have been provided each day with nourishment, each night with repose. Of trouble, God has never sent you more than your share. Of help, the means have never failed you. To whom do you owe all this? To God. Jean Baptiste, be no longer ungrateful, and banish those anxious thoughts; for what could ever induce you to think that the Hand from which you have already received so much, would close against you when you grow old, and have greater need of help? I finished my prayer, and felt at peace.'"

"I know the truth of that story. I *feel* it!" cried Much Afraid, and her voice was quite firm and glad. She put Angelo's childish hand to her lips and said: "Dear little hand, you shall guide me always!"

But Angelo said very simply, "No, Faith shall guide us both!"

Presently after a long, long time, all grew

still again. The wild beasts had passed. Angelo was able to look at his new companion. Much Afraid was slight and fragile, with a gentle, timid face; a woman in years, a child in appearance. Angelo's hand tightened involuntarily on hers.

"Do not tremble, dear friend," said he.

> "'Fear God and fearing God know that
> Thou hast nothing else left to fear.'"

The immediate danger over, the affrighted pilgrims dared to speak once more. They drew together and conversed in low voices of the dread thing that had happened. They were a diminished band, for many of their number, obstinate, fearful, unbelieving, had fallen a prey to the ravenous beasts.

"Youth did right valiant service," said one. "His goodly spear slew a full score of the cruel beasts. He is very brave."

And turning his head, Angelo saw the lad who had walked with him that morning. He was the same lad, yet different. His rich robe of worldly wealth had been cast away for the

armor of the King's soldier, and he held against his heart a shining shield, that was dented, and battered, and worn, yet never pierced. And on his face was a frank, brave smile. The restless, dissatisfied look, had quite gone.

"Did you fight the lions?" the child asked, with a smile.

"Yes," said Youth, "and drove them back successfully. The King has made me one of His soldiers, and I am proud to march beneath His banner, and to protect those weaker ones who are my fellow-pilgrims. But, dear little child," his voice dropped, and he drew near and took Angelo's small hand in his big one, "I have not forgotten. . . . I shall never forget. Had it not been for you, I should have, at dawn of day, grown impatient and reckless and left this Narrow Way for the Path of Pleasure. It was your influence that held me back!"

"Angelo," said a sweet clear voice. And there stood beside him the beautiful White Lady, "Little Angelo, I have thought much of what you said to me. The remembrance of your simple words has gone with me through the burden

and heat of this tempestuous day. It has given me renewed courage, fresh hope. I have beheld this day sin and sorrow, and that awful thing, suffering; my heart has been stabbed to the quick by the misery I could not alleviate. And yet through all has run one note that has saved the whole melody from turning to despair—one key-note most beautiful and hopeful."

"What is the note called?" Angelo asked wonderingly.

"It is the key-note to the melody of the mystery of suffering," said the White Lady, "and it is called Faith."

CHAPTER V.

ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.

"And if, in thy life on earth,
In the chamber or by the hearth,
'Mid the crowded city's tide,
Or high on the lone hillside,
Thou canst cause a thought of peace,
Or an aching heart to cease,
Or a gleam of joy to burst
On a soul in sadness nurst;
Spare not thy hand, my child!"

GEORGE MACDONALD.

AMONG that pilgrim band were many who unmurmuringly bore very heavy burdens. These were patient, cheerful folk, who always plodded on, come what might, who never questioned, who never looked back.

One was a lad in the very spring of life, upon whose young shoulders had been laid the burden of an incurable disease that could only end in death. He went on his way very peacefully, very trustfully, a smile on his pale lips, his eyes uplifted to the clear sky in whose azure depths he seemed to read some happy message.

Another was a woman who had long bidden good-bye to youth, a woman who possessed neither charm nor attraction. It seemed that there could be little joy in her pale, colorless, commonplace life. She had an infirm aged mother, who, querulous and exacting, leaned heavily upon her, and never thanked her for her devoted care. Her brothers were wild, reckless men, who in their boyhood had left the Narrow Way for the Path of Pleasure, and whose selfish and mercenary lives were a continual strain upon her. It seemed, indeed, the Narrow Way was very narrow where this poor soul was concerned. And yet no word of complaint passed her lips, no dissatisfied murmur. Quietly and patiently she trod her appointed path, taking up day after day, with willing hands, the same old, heavy burden.

To look upon her made one think of the words of that sympathetic poet, who wrote in gentle compassion of "that great procession of the unloved who not only wear the Crown of Thorns but must hide it . . . hide it even from themselves. . . . There is for them no depth of tenderness in my nature that Pity has not sounded. Somewhere—somewhere, love is in store for them. . . . Think of the griefs that die unspoken!

"'We count the broken lyres that rest
Where the sweet, wailing singers slumber;
But o'er their silent sister's breast,
The wild-flowers who will stoop to number?
A few can touch the magic string,
And noisy Fame is proud to win them;
Alas for those who never sing,
But die with all their music in them!'"

Somewhere—somewhere love is in store for them, in store for all the King's children, those who love and trust Him. Somewhere? Aye, in the land that is not very far off, where: "*Beyond these voices there is peace.*"

Another there was, a poor blind orphan child, whose innocent blue eyes looked unseeingly upon

the beautiful world around her. She might never behold the green spring world that brought joy to the hearts of other children, might never gaze entranced upon pink-tipped daisy and golden buttercup. The blue sky must be to her as some wondrous fairy story. The shining stars could never shine for her. But she was happy, quietly, *really* happy, and sometimes lifting her sightless eyes to a sympathetic, pitiful face she would smile and say: "I shall be blind no more when I enter the Celestial City. '*Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.*'"

These three are but examples. There were many such. Some indeed—and not a few—who bore yet heavier burdens. Among the most lonely were the *unloved.*

And they bore their burdens cheerfully—nay, willingly. They were calm and quiet and content.

"What is the secret of these lives?" Angelo asked of his Guardian Angel, his wistful voice awed and low.

And Faith said, "They are The Best Beloved of the King. '*Whom the Lord loveth he*

chasteneth.' He has chosen these gentle souls and set them apart. They suffer here in this short life, it is true—they have a larger share of suffering than other pilgrims, but they suffer '*and are strong.*' Their finest faculties, their noblest capabilities, are brought to perfection by such sufferings as must crush meaner natures. Beneath the blast of adversity they blossom into flower as others—weaker, less favored—blossom in the sunshine. And when they reach the City Celestial a joy most infinite, a joy exceeding that of their fellow-pilgrims, shall be theirs. In the crowns of these patient saints—these who have passed through great tribulation—shall the rarest jewels be set. The radiancy of their white robes shall be wondrous to behold. Their place in Heaven shall be very near the King's throne."

"And do they know this—can they foresee it even now?" the child asked eagerly.

"That were not possible," answered Faith, quietly. "Like other pilgrims they only see '*through a glass darkly.*' But the King has sent a special peace into their sorely tried hearts, even the '*peace of God, which passeth all un-*

derstanding.' And this, little child, is the reason of their happy confidence, their untiring patience. Many a one may say, and speak the words from the depths of a grateful heart—

"'I often think I cannot spell
The lesson I must learn,
And then in weariness and doubt,
I pray the page may turn.
But time goes on, and soon I find
I was learning all the while;
And words which seemed most dimly traced
Shine out with rainbow smile."

F. R. HAVERGAL.

"And theirs, when we come to the City Celestial, will be the brightest crowns of all! Oh happy saints! I could envy them their heavy burdens."

"You have your own burden, Angelo, and you bear it right bravely. Your lame foot often pains you, often makes the way seem doubly hard."

"Is that a burden? It seems a very little one compared with those I see around me," the child responded simply.

"The King sends to each pilgrim a message,"

said Faith. "He says: '*Bear ye one another's burdens.*'"

"Ah! I would willingly do so. But how can I who am only a weak little child?"

"Very easily, dear one. You may bear the burden of the sorrowful by words of sympathy, you may bear the burden of the lonely by looks of love. And although you may not take upon your innocent shoulders the burden of sin, you may lead the sinner to the foot of the Cross and teach him where he may lay his load down. Baby hands have lightened many a burden all through the ages.

"'Little words of kindness
Little looks of love
Make this earth an Eden
Like the Heaven above.'

"Little children are the special messengers of the King."

Angelo, ever quick to obey the voice of Faith, learned this lesson well.

The little lame boy was as sunshine to that pilgrim band.

His innocent prattle, his confiding ways, his

boundless sympathy appealed to the hardest heart there.

Many a sad soul would smile as the eager little hands strove to help him to bear his burden. And somehow at the touch of those little hands the burden grew strangely lighter! Could it be the near presence of Faith that accomplished this? The pilgrim could but put this question to himself.

And best of all he would read to them from his little Bible, and with new hope awakening in their hearts, they would hear of the Peace of the City Celestial to which the Narrow Way led.

There should be no pain there, in that blessed City. Neither sorrow nor sighing. God should wipe away the tears from every eye!

"Who were these? On earth they dwelt;
Sinners once of Adam's race,
Guilt and fear and suffering felt;
But they were saved by sovereign grace.

"Palms of glory, raiment bright:
Crowns that never fade away
Gird and deck the saints in light,
Priests and Kings and Conquerors they."

"To that City the King will bring us—even us," Angelo said with a child's unquestioning trust. And the pilgrims answered, "Amen."

There was one burden so very heavy, that he who walked beneath it was almost bowed to the ground. He who bore this cruel weight was an old, old man; his hair was snow-white, his thin face was scored by a myriad deep lines, and his sunken eyes were angry and suspicious. He had borne his burden always—always. When he had first taken it upon his back, he had been a bright young boy, just starting upon the road of life, happy, confident, full of promise. The burden had effected a complete change. It had clouded his brightness and crushed his happiness. Suspicion had succeeded confidence in his heart. The promise of life lay blighted like a green sapling cut off by the frost. And this was not marvellous, for it was a dark and hideous burden. People shuddered when they looked at it. Faith told Angelo it was called *Self*.

The old man grew visibly older day by day, and when the march was long, he was left far behind the other pilgrims, for he was exceedingly

feeble, and the burden seemed to him to grow heavier every hour.

Angelo was very sorry for him. The child's tender heart filled with pity when he looked at the worn old figure staggering beneath its dreadful load. There was to him something infinitely pathetic in the anxious, worn, hopeless old face, and the poor shuffling feet that must soon finish their earthly course.

And the old man was so lonely! After a time every one shunned him. With glances of dread and loathing at the burden of Self they could not induce him to cast away, the pilgrims passed by on the other side. Even the little children ran away at his approach—the burden frightened them. Nor was this wonderful, for indeed the burden was most dark and loathsome.

One day Angelo looked in vain for the old figure with the heavy load. It was not with the pilgrim band.

"Go back a few paces," whispered Faith, "and you will find him. He is in sore need of your help."

The child needed no second bidding. Quickly

he retraced the Narrow Way. Nor had he far to go. There, seated upon a felled tree, was the old man. He was bent nearly double by the burden his shrinking shoulders still bore. He breathed short and thick, with evident difficulty.

"Water, water," he gasped. "A little water for pity's sake."

Faith put into Angelo's hands a golden cup in which was a clear and sparkling fluid.

"It is water from the stream called Trust," he said. "Hold it to the poor sufferer's lips, and he will learn confidence in you—a confidence which may do marvellous things for him."

The old man drank eagerly. The refreshing draught seemed instantly to revive him. He breathed more freely, and a little color returned to his livid face.

"You are a good child," he presently said. "They had abandoned me to my fate—those selfish, careless pilgrims yonder. I called to them for help and they heeded me not. A miserable mercenary crowd!" He clenched his withered hand in powerless passion.

"They did not hear you, your voice is so faint and weak. If you would cast away your burden," Angelo gently said, "you would feel so much stronger, so much happier. Will you not let me loosen the cords that bind it?"

The aged pilgrim flushed deeply, and bit his lip.

"The same old cry," he sneered. "Lay down your burden, lay down your burden! And if I lay it down, this burden that I have borne all my days, tell me what have I left? What can I get in exchange? It is my all."

"If you lay it down," said Angelo, "the King, who is ever mindful of all His pilgrims, will give you instead His Peace, and those who possess that want for nothing. Oh, lay it down at the foot of the Cross!"

And as the child spoke, there drifted on the breeze a gentle Angel voice, and these were the words it spoke:

"Oh, sad hearts and suffering! Anxious and weary ones! Look to the Cross. There hung your King. The King of sorrowing souls, and more, the King of sorrows.

"Ay, pain and grief, tyranny and desertion, death and hell. He has faced them one and all, and tried their strength and taught them His, and conquered them right royally! And since He hung upon the Cross sorrow is divine, God-like; all things are blessed now but sin; for all things excepting sin are redeemed by the life and death of the Son of God. Blessed are all things, weak as well as strong. Blessed are all days, dark as well as light, for all are His and He is ours. And all are ours, and we are His forever." *

"Ah, I am so weary—so weary," moaned the old man pitifully.

"You can never rest while you cling to that dreadful burden," said the child.

"Surely I have not much further to go. I have come a long way—a very long way—and I am growing old and sorely feeble."

Angelo laid his little hand upon the poor bent shoulders.

"I pray you listen, dear Sir," he said very gently. "You may never enter the Celestial City

* Charles Kingsley.

with that burden upon your back. Faith tells me such a thing is impossible."

The old man did not speak. Covering his thin, worn face with his hands, he wept bitterly. That was all his answer.

"Oh, what can I do?" cried Angelo, deeply distressed. "What can I do?"

"Unfasten the cords that support the burden, and let it fall to the ground," whispered Faith.

Half timidly the child essayed to do the bidding of his Guardian Angel. What if the old man were affronted, angry? What if he roughly repelled him?

But the tired figure offered no resistance. Hopelessly, despairingly, the old pilgrim sat there, passive as some worn-out, wearied child.

Angelo's quick fingers never blundered with their work. The cords were unloosened. The burden of Self fell to the ground with a heavy thud, and rolling away down the grassy slope, was lost to sight.

And then suddenly—quite suddenly there came a change in the despondent figure of the pilgrim. The down-bent head was lifted, the bowed shoul-

ders were straightened, the trembling hands grew steady.

The old man lifted up his face, and there was a smile on his lips and a wondering look in his eyes.

"Ah! I am young once more!" he cried. "This is as a new life!"

And Angelo was so glad that he could not but weep for joy. He thought it must be foolish to cry when he was pleased, but somehow he could not help it. The tears would have their way.

The old man seemed to understand.

"You are a dear child," he said, and drew him to his side and kissed him. "You have done what no one else has ever succeeded in doing. You have rid me from the awful burden of Self."

But Angelo said—

"It was not I. No, you must thank the King whose instrument I was. If you love the King and trust Him you will grow very happy. Listen to what I once read in a good book! I have remembered it always because it is so sweet and peaceful. "I am connected personality and all

with One who is able to subdue all things, even personality, to Himself: not by way of destruction but of appropriation, adjustment, transfiguration. Myself forever, this mysterious, persistent Ego, I am yet in the power of, under the will of, the supreme Ego of my Lord and Head. For His purposes I exist, by His Life I spiritually live. I think, I speak, I write, I visit, I do, I bear, as a member of my Head; used by the Head for His idea's execution, sustained by the Head with the silent infusion and pervasion of His Life Eternal. Across all the uneffaceable lines of my personality He yet writes by this parable of His word, the truth that I exist, whatever the depth and range of the existence for Him and by Him."

He was very grateful, very humble. Angelo thought he was too grateful and told him so in his pretty childish way. And presently, when they had talked together very happily for a little while, they arose and went on their way, the old man holding the young hand in a close grasp.

"Don't leave me, little one," said the old man.

"You have done so much for me—so very, *very* much. I could not bear to lose sight of you."

And very readily Angelo promised that he would not leave this old pilgrim, who was so old, and so feeble and who greatly needed some one to love him and care for him. Angelo was only glad to be able to help him. His was a very sympathetic nature.

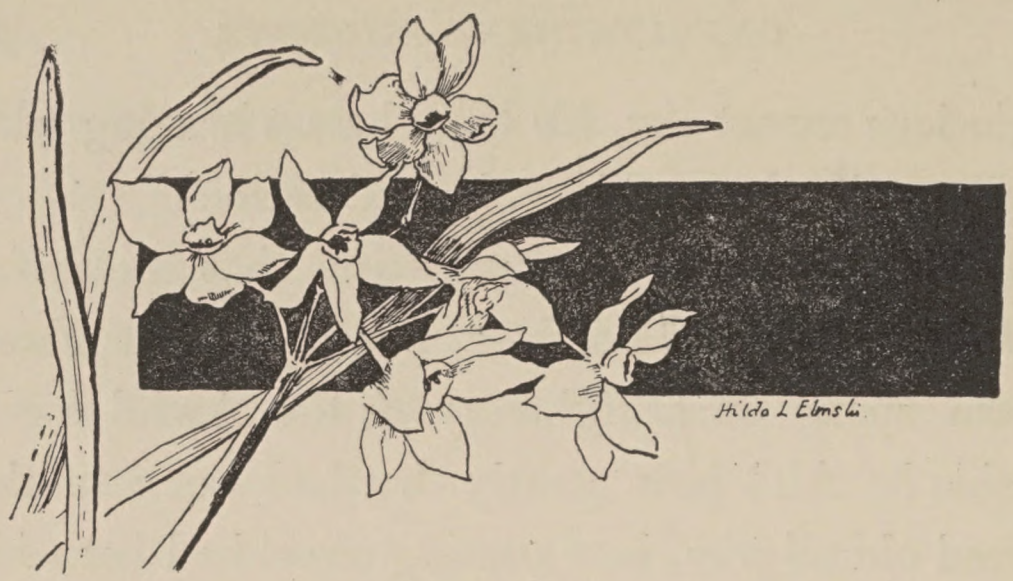
But this ready service was not long demanded of the little child. There came one day at evening time, down the narrow path a winged figure so radiant and so beautiful, that even the innocent eyes of Angelo could not bear to look upon it. And it took the worn hand of the old pilgrim from that of his child companion, and lifted the weary frame in its strong, gentle arms, and so bore it away. And the old man was not afraid, only very, very happy, and he called to Angelo: "We shall meet again in the City Celestial." So they parted, these two, and the river Jordan rolled a resistless force between the several ways they trod.

Angelo stood in wondering awe alone upon the Narrow Way, his blue eyes fixed on the golden,

glorious sunset sky, his baby breast heaving with an emotion he could not have described.

Could that gentle presence, that beautiful tender Angel, be indeed Death—Death whom men spoke of affrightedly as the Awful Inevitable? Ah! how gently he had come to the tired old pilgrim, how passing sweet had been his one clear call!

"It seems to me," mused Angelo, "that in place of the King of Terrors, must have come the Angel of Love."



CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF SUNBEAM.

"A singer sang a song of cheer,
And the great world listened and smiled;
For he sang of the love of a Father dear,
And the trust of a little child;
And souls that before had forgotten to pray
Looked up and went singing along the way."

"Look for the sunlight the Lord sends into your days."

DO not think the Angel Faith told Angelo "that the Christian life is a joyless life. It has its difficulties and its dangers, but it has, too, its happiness and peace, such happiness and peace as may never be found in any other life. There is a bright side and a grave

Sunbeam said, "It is a glad world. The King has given me many beautiful things, the blue sky, the birds, the flowers, I *must* be happy."

p. 105.

side to everything. Stand with me on yonder hill-top when the sun is low in the heavens at wane of day. The sun has sunk beneath the margin of the hill and the valley to eastward is dark with shadows, and already night seems closing in. But look at the western valley! It is all glorious with the level light of evening sunshine, the cornfields shine like fields of gold, in the emerald grass every tiny flower and leaf stands out clearly and brightly. So is it with the Christian life. There are two sides: the shadow side and the sunlit side. If sin had never entered into the world there had been no shadowed side. Sin—and sin alone has touched with gloom a beautiful happy world."

"The King means us to be happy. I am sure of that," Angelo said, with a child's sweet simple confidence. "All the world seems to tell me so, the daisies and the buttercups, and the dear little birds that sing so beautifully, and the rippling stream, and the blue sky; God made them all, and they are happy things."

"Listen, and I will tell you a story," said Faith, "the story of Sunbeam."

"Once, long years ago, there was born in a quiet country village a little child—a boy. He was not the child of wealthy parents and he was not beautiful, but he was a perfectly happy little baby. When people bent over his cradle he smiled up at them sweetly and confidently. He was always contented. He never cried like the other babies of the village. 'He's like a little sunbeam,' the neighbors said. And so when he was named they called him 'Sunbeam,' and by that beautiful name he was known all his life.

"Sunbeam grew and prospered. Presently he was able to lisp out a few words and to tumble about with the other little children in the sweet new-mown hay or on the soft sand of the seashore. The other little children sometimes quarrelled or cried, but Sunbeam did neither. He was the happiest little child you ever saw.

"Years passed by and Sunbeam was ten years old. His curly hair was as golden as his name and his sweet nature was as genial.

"'You are always happy,' the other children said to Sunbeam. 'Why are you so happy?'

"Sunbeam said, 'It is a glad world. The

King has given me many beautiful things, the blue sky, the birds, the flowers; I *must* be happy.'

"'But there is much sin and suffering in the world. Have you no fear of these things, child?' asked one older.

"Sunbeam smiled. 'The King will not let them harm me,' he said. 'He will keep me safe.'

"Then he showed them the secret of his happiness—the secret of all true happiness. Unfastening his collar he displayed a golden medal which was suspended from his neck with a white ribbon. On the medal were inscribed these words—

"'I am the King's.'

"'Is it a charm?' the children asked, wondering and awe-struck.

"'It is the only charm that can keep us from evil,' said Sunbeam, with a sweet, grave smile on his thoughtful face. 'When I was a little baby lying in my cradle the Angel of Love came and tied this treasure round my neck. No one saw it, for except to the wearer, it is frequently invisible. But it is the secret of my happiness.'

"'Oh, would that we might gain like treasure!' cried one child, wistfully.

"'You may,' answered Sunbeam. 'It is very simple too—wonderfully simple. You have only to ask the King.'

"'But how shall we find Him?'

"'Without difficulty. He is very nigh unto the children. He loves them, you see.'

"'How shall we ask Him? What should we say?' the children cried anxiously.

"'Let us kneel upon the grass and ask Him all together,' said Sunbeam. And the little children knelt there upon the grass amid the buttercups and daisies, and led by Sunbeam repeated this simple petition: 'Lord, make me Thine.'

"It was just a child's prayer, nothing more, but it went up straight through the blue sky to the gates of Heaven, and the Angels gathered it in with ready hands and bore it right to the foot of that glorious Throne where sits the children's Saviour.

"It was wonderful to the children to see how quickly that prayer was answered. They did not know the King as Sunbeam knew Him, and they marvelled when they rose to their feet to find suspended from the neck of each

child a medal like that worn by their little friend.

"'I am the King's.'

"Those were the words inscribed upon each medal, and as the children read them, a glow of gladness and of new hope thrilled through each little heart. They knew at once why Sunbeam was so happy.

"The children went to their homes when the shades of night began to fall upon the pleasant fields, and the fathers and mothers marvelled at the great change that had come upon them. They were not perfect all at once. They were not always gentle and forbearing and patient. But *they tried to be good.*

"'Why is this change?' the grown people asked, marvelling. And the children showed them their medals, and when they read the words inscribed upon them the fathers' and mothers' faces grew grave and thoughtful, and they said to one another, 'This is a wonderful thing.'

"It set them pondering, these grown people, and they began to think that it would be well if

they could share a gift that had brought so much happiness to their children.

"'We, too, would be the King's,' they said, 'if one would show us the way.'

"And so the children taught the fathers and mothers the prayer they had repeated after Sunbeam:

"'Lord, make me Thine.'

"They said it together every day, night and morning, and often at other times, and a wonderful happiness came to each and all. It was a happiness that shone in their faces, making homely countenances beautiful and hard hands soft and gentle and rough voices sweet and kind.

"Other people coming from afar and knowing naught of the story of Sunbeam wondered at the peace and contentment of the inhabitants of this quiet hamlet in the western valley, and presently they called their home The Happy Village.

"When Sunbeam grew older and stronger he had to leave that peaceful place and go out and work in the great world, as it is a man's duty to work. He started forth with a brave heart and

happy hopeful eyes, for he took with him a charm against which all evil was powerless, and often his hand sought and clasped the golden medal and his lips murmured the words:

"'I am the King's.'

"People told him that the world was sad and weary, full of sorrow and sin. But Sunbeam always answered them brightly and their gloomy doubts threw no shadow upon his path.

"'The world is very beautiful,' he said. 'The King has filled it with loveliness. He wishes us to be happy, we have only to ask Him for the true secret of happiness.'

"He showed them the medal he wore about his neck, and their gloomy faces grew wondering and curious.

"'Does it make you really happy to belong to the King?' they said. 'Is that the true secret of your happiness?'

"And when Sunbeam assured them that this indeed was so they marvelled the more and said:

"Some people who call themselves Christians are so different to you. They are solemn and joyless. They look reproachfully on innocent

amusements and harmless fun. They seem soured and miserable rather than happy.'

"'That is their mistake,' answered Sunbeam. "'The King wishes us all to be very happy. He gives us this beautiful world with its thousand —its numberless gracious and lovely things—and He bids us be happy. Only we must never forget Him, that is all. And indeed, indeed, dear friends, this is well, for without Him is no true happiness.'

"So Sunbeam went on his way, a glad, strong figure with the light of a perfect happiness shining on his face. And wherever he went men looked after him marvelling and said:

"'It is wonderful how happy he is in this world, where there is so much sickness and sorrow!'

"There came to Sunbeam as there must come to each and all, his allotted portion of grief and trouble and worse—ah far, far worse! of temptation. But on he went, on—on—his heart filled with a faith which nothing could extinguish, his lips murmuring the words, 'I am the King's.'

"And the King who had made him a happy

little child, a glad innocent boy and a hopeful, confident youth, brought him safe through all, being very mindful of His own."

"This is the story of Sunbeam, little Angelo," said the Angel Faith. "I walked beside him all the way of his earthly journey and knew him well. He was very constant to me. I never knew a more constant pilgrim. In his darkest day he but held my hand the closer."

"And he was very happy," softly said Angelo.

"Very happy. He had the happiest heart I ever saw. You know his great, glad secret?"

"Yes, ah yes, indeed! It was contained in the words—'I am the King's.'"

The sun was low in the western heavens, the valley was filled with lovely level light. Angelo's childish eyes gazed admiringly upon the beautiful world God had made, and his heart was filled with confidence and joy.

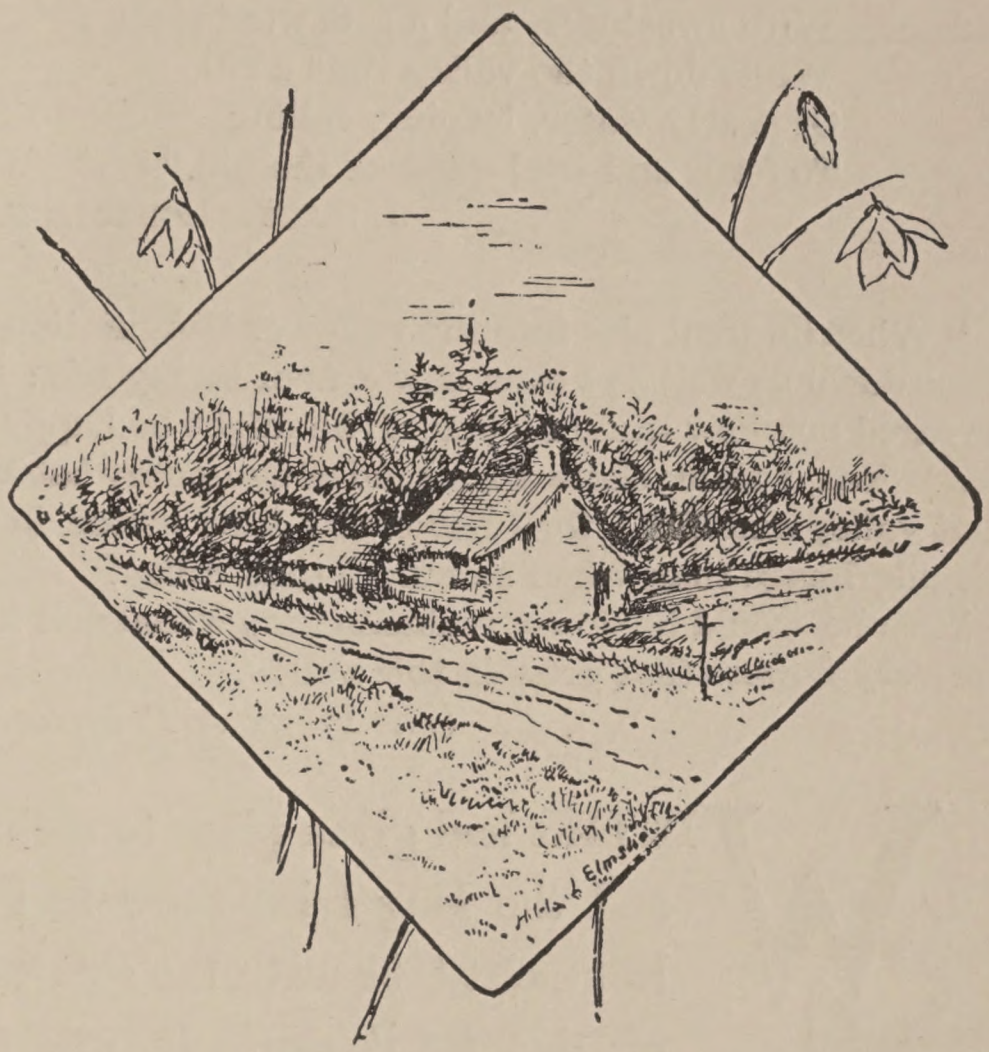
"That boy was very right," he murmured. "The King does love us, does wish us to be happy in this lovely land."

And so was comfort and new hope brought to this little pilgrim by the story of another little

pilgrim who had trodden just such another path as his.

"There are nettles everywhere,
But smooth green grasses are more common still;
The blue of heaven is larger than the cloud."

In the shades of a quiet valley.



CHAPTER VII.

IN THE SHADES OF A QUIET VALLEY.

"Far o'er the mountain summit lies
A vale of gladness ever green,
Where feathery ferns and moss have been
From long forgotten centuries.
There beauty lives nor ever dies,
But summer after summer comes
And clothes again the mountain domes

With sweetness, and a soft wind sighs ;
While down the valley runs a rill
Of pearly water, leaping, calling
To ferns and wild musk of the hill."

J. STEELE ROBERTSON.

"When he went also into the valley of Humiliation he went down as well as I ever saw a man in my life ; for he cared not how mean he was, so he might be happy at last. Yea, I think there was a kind of sympathy betwixt that valley and him ; for I never saw him better in all his pilgrimage than when he was in that valley.

Here he would lie down, embrace the ground and kiss the very flowers that grew in this valley.

(*The Pilgrim's Progress.*)

WINTER had given place to spring, and the long lying snow had at last melted beneath the soft kiss of the April sun. It was the hopeful season when—

"The brake and the tufted grass are high,
And in the shades of cloisters dim
Unconscious birds sweet requiems sing."

The birds were indeed melodious. Skylark and blackbird and finch strained their tiny throats in joyous rapturous rivalry. But to Angelo, listening with a child's quick appreciation of

the beautiful there seemed nothing sweeter than the thrush's song.

"It is like a hymn," he said, wonderingly. "A hymn of Praise. I think it must be something like the Angel's song in the City Celestial." And then in the quiet green glade with the spring foliage fluttering above him, and the bird's melody flooding the scented air, he fell into a long sweet day-dream, picturing with childish imaginings the glories of that Heaven where the Angel's song flows on eternally.

The pilgrims' way lay through the Valley of Humiliation, and to two at least, of the little band, it seemed a peaceful vale enough.

One of these was Angelo. The little lame Prince had no proud spirit to quell, no vaunting self-esteem to contend with. His hand in that of Faith he went on his way trustful and happy, only stopping now and again to pluck the flowers of Love and Hope that sprang beneath his baby feet.

The other was Much Afraid. Hers was a simple, unassuming soul, and in the Valley of Humiliation she met with nothing that could

cause her suffering. She never left Angelo for long, and his sweet child-presence seemed to have banished the fears that once tormented her over-anxious mind.

And betwixt these two walked the Angel called "Faith," teaching them very gently, very patiently, many a wholesome lesson that other folk of harder heart must learn more roughly.

The Valley of Humiliation was a shady valley. Great green trees threw their leafy branches across the path, which was smooth and verdant.

The azure sky, so deeply, purely blue, only showed in tiny patches here and there amid the interlacing boughs. The shafts of golden sunshine stealing along the grassy glades lingered with tender touch upon the marvellous flowers that grew in rich profusion everywhere. There was a perfect festival of flowers—flowers of all sorts and of all seasons. But the sweetest of all were the pure Lilies of Love, and the fragrant Violets of Hope. Angelo was forever stooping to fill his eager baby hands with these lovely blossoms. Some there were in that pilgrim band who seemed unconscious of them, who even

119

crushed them beneath their careless feet. But the little Prince delighted in their rare beauty with a child's simple love of the beautiful. For the willing pilgrim this Valley of Humiliation was a very peaceful vale. Only those who rebelled and doubted found it beset with dangers. Only those who wilfully closed their eyes were unconscious of its beauties.

"You have naught to fear in this place," Faith told his charges. And the hearts of Angelo and of Much Afraid grew light and confident at his words.

One summer's evening, when the pilgrims stopped to rest, Angelo found himself beside the beautiful White Lady. He had often seen her as she went about among her fellow-travellers, ministering to their wants; he had often watched her wonderingly, admiringly, marvelling at her untiring patience and gentleness. But they had exchanged no words of importance since that day when, in the Desert of Temptation, she had unburdened her heart to him. There was little time for talk, the White Lady was always so fully occupied. She had so many calls on her attention.

119

But now, for a few moments, she allowed herself to rest, and it was with a grateful sigh that she seated herself upon the grassy slope beneath a great oak tree.

"Come and talk to me," she said, looking up at the little Prince. "We have been but strangers of late!"

Angelo was glad of the opportunity of speaking to her. And it seemed that she was pleased to meet him.

"Well, little one," and she drew him to her and kissed him. "And how goes it with you in this quiet valley?"

"I think it is a beautiful valley," answered the child. "And I am very happy."

"Ah!" she said, "you are right. There was a time when I dreaded this shady vale, when I feared it might be dark for me. But now I see the emptiness of my fears. It is the most peaceful path my feet have trodden for many a long day. The darkness and the trouble belong to the past—the Calvary of the soul is over—the victory won. Do you know those verses? But ah! how should you, you happy child. Listen!

"She drew him to her and kissed him." p. 120.

"God draws a cloud over each gleaming morn
  Wouldst thou ask why ?
It is because *all* noblest things are born
  In *agony*.

Only upon some cross of pain and woe
  God's son may lie.
Each soul, redeemed from self and sin must know
  Its Calvary.'"

She looked up as she spoke at the far away blue of the sky just visible between the interlacing branches of the trees, and smiled a very sweet smile : "*Each soul redeemed from self and sin,*" she repeated.

Angelo sat down beside her on the soft grass, and gathering the flowers of Love and Hope that grew all about them, the sweet fragrant violets and lilies of the valley, laid them in her hands.

The White Lady took the rare blossoms up lovingly and fastened a bunch of them in the bosom of her spotless dress.

"Your gift is very welcome, little one," she said. "These are the fairest flowers that bloom. There are none others quite so fair. I think," she added musingly, "it must be because our King Himself planted them."

"Ah! Did He indeed?" The little face flushed; the dark eyes grew bright.

"Yes, that their pleasant perfume and delicate beauty might cheer the hearts of weary pilgrims. We all grow tired sometimes, little one, and need the sweetness of Love and Hope."

"*You* never seem tired," said Angelo, wonderingly. "And yet, dear White Lady, you must have come a long way by this Narrow Path?"

"A long way," she answered thoughtfully. "But when I first trod it I was not a little child like you. For many years—through all my childhood—through all the best days of my girlhood—my feet traversed the Path of Pleasure. Unthinkingly, carelessly I glided down the broad and sunny way without thought for the end. Love came to me when all my world was fair and sweet with the beauty of spring-tide. Together, hand in hand, we wandered on, Love and I, perfectly satisfied, perfectly happy. . . . But ah! that did not last. . . . There came a day when Love lay dead upon the path at my feet—dead and lifeless with an arrow in his false heart. And then I knew he was not Love at all, only a poor hollow

sham! . . . And I? I had given him all—my life's best! . . . Little, innocent child, I can never make you know what I suffered—I would not if I could—the knowledge would break your tender heart. . . . I was not alone. Grief walked with me. His was a gaunt and hopeless figure. 'Your life is passed and over,' he said. 'That is, all that is good in it. The future holds nothing for you but a waste of weary, colorless years to be dragged out in loneliness and pain. You will do well to lie down and die.' . . . . Grief was not companionless, with him was Despair. . . . And I? Ah! how did I live through that awful time? Then one day came to me a quiet, gray figure; upon her brow was written Duty and in her hands were quantities and quantities of unfinished work. 'There is yet much left for you to do,' said Duty. 'Arise, take my hand, and come forth. The King has need of thee in His vineyard.' Almost mechanically I followed where Duty led. Together we left the Path of Pleasure—ah, what a barren name had that become for me! and entered the Narrow Way. 'Hold up your head,' said Duty, 'and go for-

ward; never mind if your eyes are holden so that you cannot see. You are in the right path—the King's highway. Follow me steadily and by and by we shall meet one whom men call Peace. I lead the way to that gentle spirit, and those who follow me never fail to find him. It is the King's command.'"

"Faith tells me that Duty indeed spoke truly," said Angelo. "And that with Peace came also Knowledge, which could never have been yours had you not passed through the Waters of Adversity."

"I doubt it not," she answered musingly, and then speaking to herself, rather than to her little companion, she quoted the words of a great and wide-minded thinker:

"'It would be a poor result of all our anguish and wrestling if we were nothing but our own old selves at the end of it—if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of that Unknown towards which we have sent forth such irrepressible cries

in our loneliness. Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form as forces do, and passing from pain to sympathy—the one poor word which includes our best insight and love.' "

"Oh, tell me more of your life story," implored Angelo, when the White Lady ceased speaking. "Pray tell me more!"

"The rest you know," she softly said. "You have seen for yourself how it now is with me. Duty spoke truly. She led me to Peace. And now he is my gentle Guardian Angel."

The sweet spring day was departing. A tender evening breeze touched the violets and the lilies, those blossoms of Hope and Love, and all the valley was sweet with their fragrance. A thrush was singing in the hawthorn tree hard by; his thrilling song flooded the glade with matchless melody. All was very calm and still. It was one of those moments when Heaven seems strangely near to earth, when the soul is the living, aspiring, soaring creature, and the body but the prison that contains it—the tenement of a day.

The setting sun threw bright shafts of golden light down the grassy avenue. They touched the spotless robes of the White Lady and fell in their fullest radiance upon her lovely, quiet, upturned face.

"Sometimes the way seems long," she said, "and passing weary. But, I have learned to trust Him—the Holy One whose sacred feet have trodden it all. I can say '*My times* are *in thy hand.*'"

Angelo's little hand gently touched hers. He had glad tidings for her.

"Faith tells me that your probation is well nigh over and that soon you will leave the Narrow Way for the beautiful City Celestial," he said.

And so in the hush of the sweet spring evening, from the mouth of a little child came the first echo of the one clear call to this patient pilgrim.

She put her lips to the little hand and her tears of joy fell fast upon it.

"I thank the King for His message!" she said. "To see the King in His Beauty! Ah what joy, what joy!

"'For ah! the Master is so fair,
His smile so sweet to banish men,
That they who meet it unaware
Can never rest on earth again!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HILL OF DIFFICULTY.

"Nay, falter not, O heart—my little light *is* light;
And thou thyself, who art
The poetry of the human heart,
Who knowest all my weakness, and the lie
Within me, and my love's desparing cry,
Who gavest wings, teach Thou me how to fly
On high for evermore, and evermore on high!"

MAARTEN MAARTENS.

BEYOND the Valley of Humiliation rose, sharp and steep, a rugged hill. The pilgrims recognized this as the Hill of Difficulty and with fearful hearts they saw that the Narrow Way led up its steep side, and that it became on this hill a narrower way than ever before.

The prospect was alarming, many a step faltered, many a soul quailed.

"We can never mount that steep incline!" cried one timorous pilgrim.

"Surely we shall lose our footing, and be dashed to the ground and crushed," shuddered another.

"Your fear magnifies the danger," said Youth, turning on them a face glowing with enthusiasm and courage. "Step out like men, acquit yourselves as true servants of the King and all will be well. Stay, let me go first, and perchance if I lead, others may find heart to follow."

So put to shame by the brave demeanor of this mere stripling, who was but a recruit in the ranks of the King, these older pilgrims, with a

manifest effort, set themselves to mount the Hill of Difficulty.

"Your little feet are very weary, my child," said the Guardian Angel of Angelo, tenderly. And bending over him, Faith lifted the slight frail figure in his arms, and bore it onwards as gently as a loving mother carries her infant.

Angelo looked up into the Angel's face and smiled, a confident, loving smile.

"It is so good to rest," he said, contentedly.

A trembling voice called after them. It was the voice of Much Afraid.

"Oh, do not leave me, do not leave me!" she cried. "The mere sight of this dreadful hill bows down my soul with terror. I know I can never, *never* reach its summit! See the rocks lie strewn thick upon the Narrow Way! How can I pass them, and I have no strength to lift them from my path. Ah! I am lost, lost!"

"Poor soul," said Faith, and turned back and took her shaking hand. "You do indeed distress yourself for naught! Have you forgotten how our King says '*my strength is made perfect in weakness.*' Think you that He who has brought

you so far will desert you now? Hush your fears, Much Afraid, be calm. The King bids me never leave you, and surely I will lead you to the end."

So Much Afraid ceased trembling and looked up at the Guardian Angel and smiled, and albeit the smile was faint, there was an element of trust in it.

It was wonderful to see how the stones rolled from the path as Much Afraid drew near. Faith was always with her—an abiding presence—and at the mere flutter of his great white wings all obstacles melted, disappeared.

It was plain to all beholders that the King was mindful of the timid pilgrim Much Afraid, for she encountered upon the Hill of Difficulty none of the troubles and temptations that beset her stronger companions.

At noon-tide Angelo and Much Afraid rested for awhile on a rock by the wayside.

"I am not tired," said the child, "for Faith has carried me in his arms all the way. But it is good to stay here a little while, and you look weary, poor Much Afraid."

"I am of such a doubting heart!" sighed the poor pilgrim.

"The King never fails those who trust in Him," Angelo said, very earnestly. "He is the Helper of the helpless.

"'We cannot trust Him as we would,
So frets weak nature's reckless mood
To throw her peace away.
But birds and flowerets round us preach
And all the present evil, teach
Sufficient for the day!'

"Keep close to Faith, dear Much Afraid, and he will bring you to the Celestial City. Once within the Golden Gates you can never again know fear. Fear will be shut out with all that is sad and sinful."

So, guided by Faith, did little Angelo minister to the wants of this timid pilgrim, and a child's simple words brought healing and hope to the weary heart.

The afternoon was waning when the pilgrim band reached the summit of the great hill. Youth stopped short, drawing a long breath and pushed back the hair from his pale, tired face.

His feet were cut and bruised, his pilgrim's robe was torn in many places. But firmly in his strong right hand he held the King's banner, and when it waved in the evening breeze all there could plainly read the inscription on it.

"*Onward.*" That was all. Just that one word "*Onward.*"

Faith set Angelo down upon the grass which grew smooth and verdant upon the summit of the Hill of Difficulty.

"Here will we rest till the morning dawns," said the Guardian Angel. "This is a safe abiding place. It is called the Plain of Peace. Many and many a pilgrim band has pitched its camp here. Over yonder, lies the Valley of Rest. It is situated upon the banks of a river—a bright river named 'Jordan.' And on the further side of that stream—never beholden of those who stand on this side but real, *real*—stands the City of the pilgrim's quest—even the City Celestial. For you, my little one, the Narrow Way is well nigh ended!"

"Oh! shall I, indeed—is it possible that I may see Him—the King in His Beauty?" Angelo's

childish voice trembled with awe, tears of very joy sprang to his blue eyes.

And Faith answered very sweetly, very solemnly:

"It is written, '*Blessed* are *the pure in heart*: *for they shall see God.*'"

The sunset glory faded from the western heavens, and long shadows began to fall over the smooth green grass. Presently, the birds hushed their evensong and so all was still in this quiet place. The night that followed, sapphire and silent, was most calm and fair—and with beauteous brilliancy a myriad stars glittered in the far away sky. Angelo laid him down to rest, his sleeping place was the grass, his pillow a rough stone. The child wished for no softer couch. He was very happy. This Plain of Peace seemed to him a sweetly restful place. And he knew—for Faith had whispered the happy secret in his ear—that a countless host of Angels, invisible, but passing strong, watched above the pilgrim camp, and were specially watchful of the children.

There was that star too, shining bright and white—the star he loved to call the Bethlehem Star.

"O lovely star ! O holy light !
Thy ways amid the dusky skies
Have led the pilgrims of the night
To where the Saviour lies."

So Angelo, committing himself to the care of the Great Shepherd, who carries in His Own tender arms the little lambs of His fold, laid him down to rest upon the crest of the Hill of Difficulty.

CHAPTER IX.

A CROSS THAT PROVED A SHIELD.

"In every trouble look unto the end
And take the cross to be thy constant friend."
THE DIVINE MASTER.

"Poor wanderer of the world's entangled wild!
There is an eye that marks thy lonely way!
A heart that loves thee as a cherished child!
A hand that waits to wipe thy tears away!"
ANON.

ONCE at sunset time when all the world looked very sweet and peaceful there came up with Angelo another pilgrim child upon whose weary face was reflected none of the peace of the quiet evening.

She was a golden-haired girl with wistful

blue eyes. She looked very little and lonely walking alone on the steep Narrow Way, and Angelo's tender heart went out to her at once.

"You are tired," he said. "I am so sorry. Take my hand. I'm not very strong or big, but maybe I can help you somewhat."

The girl took the proffered hand eagerly.

"You are very kind," she said. "Your cheerful voice has helped me already. I have come a long way—so it seems to me—and I fear I must go much further before I reach The Palace of the King! But the Narrow Way is beautiful, look at the flowers, listen to the birds' song. Poor little friend, why do you weep?"

"I weep," she said, sadly, "because I have such a heavy cross to bear. Sometimes I think it is quite the heaviest cross that was ever laid upon shrinking human shoulders. It is so sore a burden that I scarce can walk. I can never run like the other pilgrims. I can never sing on my way as they often sing. This terrible cross seems to bow me down physically and mentally. It seems to crush all the joy out of my life!"

The speaker's tears fell fast. Her voice was broken with sobs.

Angelo looked up at this Guardian Angel.

"How shall I comfort her?" he asked, distressed.

Faith's gentle face was full of pity and love.

"She is blind," he said. "Her eyes are holden. I will take her other hand and you shall help me lead her to the Mirror of Truth?"

"You will let Faith guide you," said Angelo to the girl.

"Faith! what a beautiful name!" she exclaimed. "Yes, little friend, since you wish it, he shall guide me. I cannot see him, but I can feel his hand, and it is a strong and helpful hand."

The sun had well-nigh set when the Guardian Angel and the two children stood before the Mirror of Truth. It was a still, clear lake, girt about with water-lilies, white, fragrant, golden-hearted, set in soft green leaves. The lake was as clear as glass and on its smooth surface was reflected the pale blue sky with its western glory of rosy sunset, and the dark pine trees and the

quiet hills and the flight of homing birds, and in the foreground the white-winged, beautiful Angel and the two little pilgrims.

"See, there is the reflection of the cross you bear, the cross that fills you with so much sorrow," said Faith, laying a gentle hand upon the shoulder of the sad-faced girl.

The two children looked with eager eyes into the Mirror of Truth and beheld a very wonderful thing, for lo! the cross beneath which the little pilgrim had pined was no cross at all, but a beautiful shield set with the purest jewels. And this shield was dented and scarred in many places, showing how it had warded off and turned aside the fiery darts of the enemy.

When the weeping pilgrim saw this, her tears ceased to flow and an expression of wondering relief lit up all her face.

"Oh how ungrateful I have been!" she cried, "*how* ungrateful! And often, often have I besought the King to take away my cross, and have murmured because He did it not. And now I thank Him because He would not grant my prayer! For this is no cross at all, but a shield

—a shield most wondrous that has saved me from destruction."

"So is it," said the Angel Faith, "with many a pilgrim. The cross he carries is no cross but a shield of salvation; were his eyes not holden his murmurs of discontent would be turned to songs of praise."

CHAPTER X.

A LITTLE WANDERER.

"The surest truth is the truth you know,
That, where you plant Purity, Peace will grow."

"Make thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies."

TENNYSON.

ANGELO was awakened by the sound of weeping—a child's weeping.

It was very early morning, the shades of night were but lifting from the gray hill and dark valley. In the far eastern sky, was just one bar of clear pale golden light, the herald of dawn.

"Who is it? Who is crying?" asked Angelo,

sitting up on the grass and looking about him with startled blue eyes.

A boy stood at his side, a boy of about his own age—a trifle older, perhaps. He was a pretty boy with thick brown, curling hair, and a fair little face, but his eyelids were swollen with weeping and his cheeks bathed in tears. And Angelo saw that his pilgrim's dress was covered with mud.

"Have you hurt yourself?" he asked, kindly.

"Oh, it is not that," sobbed the other child. "It's not that. It isn't the hurt I'm thinking of, it's the mud—the mud on my pilgrim's robe. My Guardian Angel bid me keep to the Narrow Way, but I—I saw a lovely golden butterfly—so beautiful! oh so beautiful! And I wanted to catch it. I gave chase and the insect flew away from the path—from the Narrow Way. I thought I should have it in a moment, so I followed. But in an instant it was far away and I after it—far from the narrow path. Presently my hand closed on it, and I uttered a cry of joy. But do you know, when I came to examine my

The boy broke into yet more bitter weeping. p. 147.

prize, the golden butterfly had changed into a dull gray moth—of a most common sort. And then, when I looked about me I saw that I was in a strange place, and nowhere could I see the narrow path. All day I stumbled on, searching for the road by which I had come in pursuit of the butterfly. But about me were tangled bushes, and muddy, trackless ways. I often stumbled and fell. My clean robe was covered with mud. My heart was filled with despair. It was evening when at last I got back on to the Narrow Way. All the other pilgrims had gone on. I had to climb the Hill of Difficulty alone. I have but just arrived here at the summit. And now, look at my robe—pray look at it! It is covered with mud, and I have read—aye, and have often been told—that there can enter into the City Celestial naught that defileth."

The boy broke into yet more bitter weeping. Worn out, he sank down upon the grass by the side of Angelo and covered his tear-stained face with his hands.

After a moment he spoke again.

"Don't you remember the hymn," he said in

a hopeless voice. "Oh it's always, *always* ringing in my ears.

"'There is a City bright
Closed are its gates to sin,
Naught that defileth,
Naught that defileth
Can ever enter in!'

"Look at my robe! It is covered with mud. Oh, when I get to the City Gates they will be closed against me, I know, I know they will!"

Angelo took his hand and spoke very earnestly.

"You need not weep, poor boy," he said. "You are sorry. That is enough. It tells us in the Bible that the white robed multitude who worship before the Throne, have '*washed their robes, and made them white.*' You too can wash your robe."

"I have tried," answered the boy, "but no water will remove the stains."

"I know a very sweet, hopeful hymn, which may help you," said Angelo. And in a low and reverent voice he repeated these lines.

"'There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.'"

"But who will lead me to the fountain, for I cannot find my way alone?" cried the boy, anxiously.

"I will lead you," said the angel called Faith. Beautiful and gracious, with strong white wings and outstretched, pitiful hands, he stood before the two children. "Put your hand into mine," he said to the boy with the soiled robe, "and I will show you the way to the fountain. No sin is too dark to be washed away therein. It cleanseth from *all* sin."

But the boy shrank back, hanging his head.

"Oh! it is an Angel and—and I am frightened because I have been naughty," he whispered to Angelo.

"But you are sorry," said Angelo, gently.

"Yes, yes. I am sorry—but—but. Oh, I have been so naughty!"

The repentant boy hid his face in his hands and sobbed.

The dawn was breaking. The bar of pale gold in the eastern sky had broadened and deepened. A rosy light flooded the heavens and the

earth. The first glow of sunrise trembled on the hills.

Suddenly there came to the two children a sound of many voices singing. The singing was such as they had never heard before. Awe and wonder and delight, filled their hearts. They listened, entranced. And these were the words of hope and love that swept up over the valley with the light of day-dawn, and seemed specially suited to the needs of one little, conscience-stricken soul,

"When penitence has wept in vain
Over some foul dark spot,
One only stream, a stream of blood
Can wash away the blot.

"'Tis Jesus' blood that washes white,
His hand that brings relief,
His heart that's touched with all our joys,
And feeleth for our grief."

As the sun in all his glory, his panoply of gold and gray, and ruddy red, rose behind the gray hills, and the first birds chirped drowsily among the trees, the singing softly died away. There followed a few chords as from a silver-stringed harp—soft, sympathetic, feeling, and then all grew still.

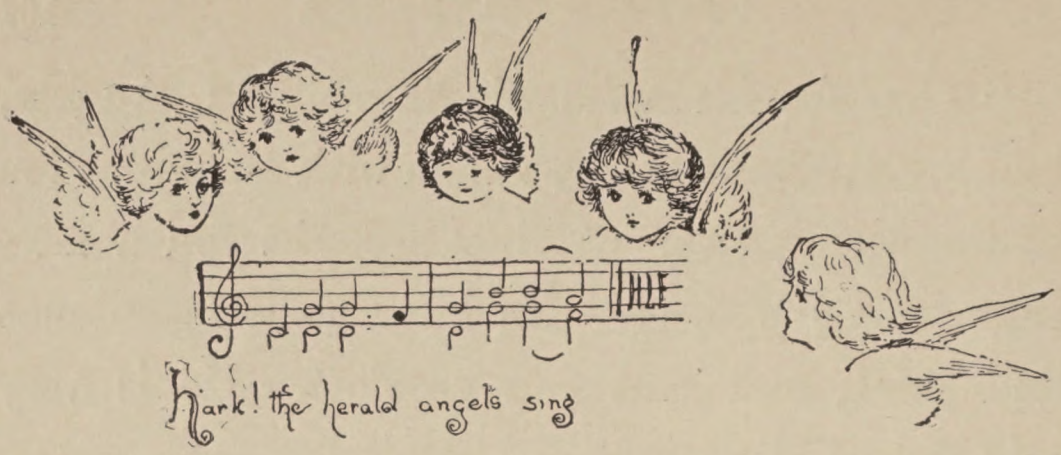
"The Angels were singing," said Angelo, looking at his little companion with an expression of wondering awe. "They brought you a message from the King. He knew your repentance and grief, and sent you comfort. He is very mindful of His Own."

"I am afraid no longer," said the boy with the soiled robe. "I pray you, gentle Angel, lead me on to the fountain where I may be cleansed from the dreadful stain of sin."

Faith took the outstretched little hand, and met the trustful, childish eyes with a glance that was loving and calm and full of reassurance.

The Angel's response fell full and clear upon the stillness of the dawn:

"*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"



CHAPTER XI.

AT THE GATES OF THE CITY CELESTIAL.

"And then methought earth faded ;
I rose, as borne on wings,
Beyond the waste of ruined lives
The press of human things.

* * * * * *

And upward, onward, shone the star
Until it seemed to me
It flashed upon the Golden gates
And o'er the crystal sea ;
And then—the gates rolled backward,
I stood where Angels trod.
It was the star of Bethlehem
Had led me up to God !"

F. E. WEATHERLEY.

IT was winter time when at the end of a long and hard day's march the pilgrim band arrived at the Village of Rest, that quiet and sheltered village which lies between the Plain of Peace and the great river Jordan.

The snow lay thick upon hill and valley, and icicles hung from the trees. Men said it was a harder winter than had been known for many years.

Angelo's limbs ached and his lightly shod feet were chilled to numbness. But his brave little heart never failed him for one instant. Only he held the firm hand of Faith in a yet closer grasp and gazed more often upon the calm, reassuring face of his Guardian Angel.

"It is not for long," Faith said. "Only a little while—quite a little while."

"And," said Angelo, "the Holy Child came by this very way my feet are treading. He knows all about it. He was weary too."

So through the wintry world by snow-bound ways, and paths all slippery with ice, passed unhurt this innocent little child.

"*Oh what a power has white simplicity!*"

Evening was closing in, when the tired wayfarers, chilled and footsore and well nigh exhausted, entered this pleasant hamlet called Rest. From every cottage door the inhabitants ran out to welcome them with hospitable greet-

ings and hearty congratulations. The reception was indeed cheering.

"Your march is well-nigh over," they said. "The worst is passed. And here you may rest awhile secure, before you cross the river yonder."

"I fain would cross the river even now, for beyond it lies the Celestial City!" cried Youth, full of impatience and enthusiasm.

But one pilgrim who was called by the name of True Heart, answered him gently, "We must each wait for the one clear call. So the King wills it."

The Village of Rest was decorated as though for a festival. Bunches and garlands of the most rare and beautiful hothouse flowers, filled every cottage window. A hundred rosy-hued lamps were suspended from the fir trees that grew straight and tall in rows on either side of the principal street. Happy bands of children walked hither and thither singing the sweetest hymns they knew. Upon every face was a smile of peace and love.

The Church bells were ringing out a glorious,

melodious chime, filling the keen, clear air with sweetest music.

It was all very bright and beautiful.

"Are you keeping some festival?" Angelo asked a village lad. And with a wondering look the boy answered: "Surely you know this is Christmastide? We are keeping the Birthday of our King. On this sacred night, many and many a year ago, the Holy Child was born at Bethlehem City and the Star of Hope pierced the darkness of Despair.

> "'Little Silver Lamps in a distant Shrine
> The stars are sparkling bright;
> The bells of the City of God ring out,
> For the Son of Mary was born to-night.
> The gloom is past and the morn at last
> Is coming with Orient light!'"

"Christmas Day! The Birthday of the Holy Child!" repeated Angelo beneath his breath. His little face flushed, his blue eyes shone. "Oh, it is all so beautiful to think of!" he cried. "To think that the King was once a little child—a little child living upon earth."

The villagers led the wearied pilgrims into their comfortable cottages and set them down to

rest by homely firesides, and set before them homely fare that was all their best. It seemed these inhabitants of the place called Rest could never make too much of the pilgrim band. There was a welcome for each and for all, from Youth with his handsome looks, and bright confident face, to timid Much Afraid and the little child Angelo. The boy who had wept over his mud-soiled robe was welcome too, and his dress was one of the whitest there, while the face that had been all stained with tears was bright and happy. And perhaps most welcome of all the pilgrims was the White Lady, for the fame of her gentle, self-forgetting, patient life, had gone before her to the Village of Rest—whispered by some Herald Angel—and the villagers were glad to show hospitality to one so good and noble. When she sat by the fire the little children gathered about her, of their own sweet accord, and she talked to them and told them stories as only a lover of children can, and Angelo thought it was very sweet to see the confidence between them.

Stealing away from his companions as they crowded about a hospitable fire, the little Prince

went out once more into the wintry night. The music of the Church bells called him, and he could but respond to the sweet, constant call. His hand in that of Faith he passed up the snowy street between the tall fir trees past merry children singing carols, past open doorways through which he caught more than one glimpse of a happy homely domestic scene, on and on, till he reached the great, beautiful Church that stood gray and majestic beneath the sapphire, starlit sky.

The little tired feet hurried through the big arched porch, and through the carved doorway, and then with slackened speed and reverently-bent head, the child crept into one of the big old-fashioned pews of the nave.

It was a most beautiful Church. Above the altar with its plain gold cross and rare white flowers, was a marble reredos of exquisite loveliness, representing a white-winged Angelic host, worshipping at the manger bed of the Holy Child. The figure of the Infant Saviour in His mother's arms, had been carved by the reverent hand of a genius. Such a loving, tender face it

was, so indescribably pure, so infinitely *pitiful!* One could fancy those gentle lips framing words of forgiveness and of hope.

"*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" . . . "*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. . . Peace be unto you.*"

One could imagine those gracious hands extended in blessing or in succoring the timid and stumbling!

It was a very beautiful figure, the figure of One Little Child in whom is embodied the Great Majesty, the Great Love . . . Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Looking upon it Angelo said in his heart:

"I feel sure that the Lord Jesus loves little children."

That was the effect of that rare sculpture upon the mind of one simple child. And if it worked no more good—no less—was this not enough to fill with joy and thankfulness the heart of the genius whose hand had formed it?

There were many people in the Church—men and women and little children.

To them it was a haven of rest, an oasis in the desert.

> "The Courts of Heav'n were lost to view,
> The world had come between :
> But here the veil is rent in two ;
> We see the things unseen."

Gladly the pilgrims joined in Prayer and Praise.

But on this holy night the vast congregation stood silent to hear one boy sing, a boy whose clear sweet voice alone sustained the Christmas Anthem.

It was a marvellous voice, melodious, soaring, perfectly true. The aspiring notes rising sweet and birdlike, echoed along the painted roof, ringing through carved arch and dim, gray clear storey, to die away into solemn silence in the deep embrasure of the west window—a wonderful window of rich stained glass, where in the shades of night hid saintly faces and figures rarely beautiful.

It was a voice that entranced, enthralled. The listening multitude scarcely seemed to breathe. Silent and motionless stood the crowd of worshippers.

And of all there was none more deeply impressed than Angelo. The eager little face, the clasped hands, the wondering eyes all betokened the pure emotion awakened in his baby breast.

The Anthem was called "Nazareth," and set forth the story of the coming of the Holy Child, the story of the Angelic host bringing glad tidings, of worshipping shepherds, of one clear shining star—the Star of Bethlehem.

"*Oh come, come and adore!*" cried the sweet clear voice. "*Oh come, come and adore!*" And the words floated away across the great dim Church and the listening multitude, lingered amid the shadows of the gray arches and pillars, and then with an echo that was like the murmur of a long-drawn, sobbing sigh died in sweet silence—a silence that quivered and vibrated with the memory of a melody.

There came into the child-mind of Angelo the remembrance of some words he had once heard or read. They seemed to him at that moment to express a great truth:

"It is good to be children sometimes, and

never better than at Christmas, when its Mighty Founder was a Child Himself."

A Child Himself! Ah! that was so good to think on. A Child Himself! He, the King, had trodden all the Narrow Way, had known a child's sorrow, a child's suffering. And He never could forget, there was infinite love and pity for children with Him—who was once a child.

When the Anthem was over and the choir took up the singing of hymn and psalm, Angelo waited to hear no more but softly stole down the dim, arched nave and out through the porch into the starry night.

A great peace filled the heart of the little pilgrim. He was perfectly happy.

Looking up into the gentle face of the Guardian Angel who walked beside him, he said very gravely and earnestly,

"I wish the Holy Child would come to-night as He came at that first Christmastide long ago! I should so love to see Him!"

And Faith answered sweetly, solemnly: "*Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Blessed* are *the pure in*

heart: for they shall see God. . . . We shall see him as he is. . . . Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.

Most beautiful was this Christmas night. The silvery moonlight flooded field and vale and hill, that, robed in a livery of untrodden snow, looked passing pure and lovely. The sapphire vault above was studded with stars,

"Those pearls of Heaven, thick-strung together,
Dropped clustering from His hand o'er all the sky."

Angelo with wondering upturned face said:

"Perhaps they're the bright eyes of Angels looking down kindly on little children."

And then he stopped to listen, for some village lads were gathered about the open door of a cottage home, and they were singing a carol very sweetly.

"The night was darker than ever before
(So dark is sin)
When the Great Love came to the stable door
And entered in.

And laid himself in the breath of kine,
And the warmth of hay,
And whispered to the star to shine,
And to break, the day.

O flowers, underneath the snow,
  That chilled His feet
As He passed by, did ye not know
  His footsteps sweet ?

O birds, whose voice He gave to sing,
  How came it that,
In the passing Presence of the Spring,
  Ye silent sat ?

O Judah, with your scriptures great,
  Had you forgot ?
The Messiah passed within your gate,
  And ye knew it not !

O Bethlehem, for all, all men
  The House of Bread,
The Great Love came at midnight there
  And was not fed."

The singing ceased, and the singers passed on. Angelo looked up wistfully at his Guardian Angel. "When the King comes again, *all men will know him,*" he said. "He will not be a little child any more, but a great monarch. Only I think it's a mistake about the birds and the flowers," he added, thoughtfully. "I'm sure they would know the Great Love, they would feel His presence in their hearts !"

"You are weary and must rest, little one,"

Faith presently told his charge. "Turn in at this open cottage door and you will find a welcome."

Angelo paused in the doorway. A woman sat at the low-burning fire. Her face though young was sad and weary. Hers was a very lonely figure, the child thought, strangely lonely on this glad night when all the world seemed joyful.

"May I come and warm myself by your fire?" he said.

His sweet young voice echoed across the little dim room. The woman started to her feet and came to meet him.

"Come in, darling, come in," she said. "You are one of the pilgrims who have just arrived, and you are very welcome. But this is a poor place. You might be better housed."

"Faith bid me come here," answered Angelo, simply. "And indeed this is a nice cottage, and you have such a kind face. . . . I am *glad* to come."

"Dear little child," said the woman. "I have been feeling very sad and solitary this evening. I think the King sent you to banish my loneliness."

She lifted him into her great armchair—the only easy-chair her poor room contained, and she brought him soup and bread—her own frugal supper. As she ministered to his wants her pale cheeks flushed and her tired eyes shone with a new brightness.

"You are a guest from the King," she said. "It is written: '*Inasmuch as ye have done* it *unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done* it *unto me.*'"

"I have read it in my little Bible," responded Angelo. He drew from his pocket the much-worn brown book, the old minstrel's gift.

"It is full of beautiful promises," he exclaimed.

"Yes," said the woman, quickly. "I know—I know. It has been the guide of my life. The King has been pleased to make my life a singularly lonely one, little child, but He has never left me comfortless."

"And now you dwell safely in the calm Village of Rest."

"*Until the day break and the shadows flee away,*" she answered, a quiet smile lighting up her pale face. "And now my heart is full of hope,

for I know and believe: '*One hour of eternity, one moment with the Lord, will make us utterly forget a lifetime's desolation.*' "

"Ah! Faith has been your Guardian Angel. I can tell that by your words, your looks!" cried Angelo, joyfully.

And the woman said: "It is indeed so: Faith has never left me for one instant of all the weary time. I prayed the King that his presence might abide with me, and my prayer was granted."

"He has said: '*Ask and it shall be given you.*' And it is written in the Holy Book, '*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,*'" responded Angelo.

"Ah! your words remind me of my own little child—a boy like you. He . . . he was very dear to me," said the woman, after a few moments' silence. "But the King took him last Christmas-tide—just a year ago this day—to the Celestial City. In the silent night while we rested, the Angel of sleep came silently and lifted my child in his arms, and bore him away over the snow-clad fields and the great dark river. When morning dawned my darling was not there to awaken

me with his baby kisses and his loving call of 'Mother,' that word so sweet to my ears." The woman paused, weeping. "He was so—so very dear!" she then cried tremulously.

"He is waiting for you at the gates of the City Celestial," Angelo told her, his little hand gently touching her bowed head. "Faith tells me he will never forget you, and soon—very soon, you will be together again."

"Dear little comforter!" she looked at him gratefully.

"Perhaps I shall see your boy before you see him," said Angelo, with sweet gravity. "Shall I give him any message from you?"

"Oh," she cried, "tell him I am taking care of his little garden—the flowers he treasured, and that the primroses grew sweet and thick in it last spring. He so loved primroses! And tell him—but ah, you need not tell him how his mother always loves him! . . . how she misses her darling."

Angelo was very tired. Gladly he laid himself down to rest in the humble guest-room of his poor hostess. The bare walls, the carpetless floor, the

uncurtained narrow lattice window, from which he could gaze at the wintry star-lit sky, were humble enough. A poor guest-room most people would have called it. But Angelo, a Prince from the Palace of Pleasure, was well content. The children of the King never shrink from humble surroundings and poor, for the Holy Child Himself once lived in a humble, poor home at Nazareth.

The poor woman downstairs, with a new sense of hope and comfort in her heart, and a blessing for her child-visitor upon her lips, opened a book and read, and these were the words her eager eyes scanned:

"I am strong
Knowing you are not lost for aye among
The hills with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
In Heaven to hold our idols: and albeit
He brake them to our faces and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white
I know we shall behold them raised complete,
The dust swept from their beauty, glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light."

God keeps a niche in Heaven to hold our idols! Oh words most sweet, most sweet!

Tired although he was, little Angelo could not sleep. With wakeful eyes and heart he lay upon

his humble couch, watching the countless stars, listening to the music of the sweet Church bells.

From the snowy street below, rang up clear and fresh joyous young voices, the voices of children. It was early yet—scarcely more than evening—and all the world kept a glad Christmas-tide. Snatches of sweet hymns, chords of sacred music floated from time to time to the little child, alone in his humble attic-room. Alone? Nay, not alone. Faith was with him—an ever abiding presence, and Angelo knew no loneliness.

"The Holy Child is very near to-night," he thought, happily. "Perhaps—for who can tell —I may if I listen very hard, hear His voice above the music of the bells and the children's song!"

Well might this little pilgrim have echoed the words of one thoughtful poet:

"Sweet is the time for joyous folk
Of gifts and minstrelsy,
Yet I, O Lowly Hearted One
Crave but thy company!
On lonesome road beset with dread
My questing lies afar,
I have no light, save in the east
The gleaming of Thy Star."

A lonesome road and a far quest, but not an endless way nor a hopeless! And the Star? It shines now as clear and bright as on that first Christmas night when it first gleamed from out the wintry Heaven. The eyes of Faith can always behold it. From the clear upturned gaze of childhood—innocent, pure-hearted childhood—it is never hidden.

Angelo lay thinking of the Holy Child, and of how the angels must be keeping his birthday in the Celestial City, and his thoughts were holy happy thoughts. Through his childish mind echoed the musical memory of the anthem the boy had sung in the beautiful Church. "*Oh come and adore—Oh come and adore!*" These words seemed repeated in the children's carols, in every dim and gentle far-off sound of the quiet, starry night.

Presently—not suddenly, nor with astonishment, but gradually and quite peacefully, Angelo became aware of a new presence in that humble room—an Angel presence, white-winged, radiant, lovely, with a golden halo about its gracious head, and a smile sweet as that of Faith upon its beautiful face.

"I am the Angel of Love," softly said a voice, a gentle voice that sounded like most exquisite music. "The King has sent me to fetch you, little one. His gracious will it is that you shall keep the Birthday of the Holy Child in the City Celestial."

So that one clear call, that must come to each and all of us sooner or later, came in the sweet solemnity of the Christmas night to this little pilgrim. And Angelo, gladly, aye, joyously stretched out his baby hands to the beautiful Angel of Love, being quite ready to depart to that bourne from which no traveller returns, and having no faintest fear of the far land that lies beyond our mortal ken. Indeed his heart was filled with wondering joy. Happiness almost incredible was his!

It was the gracious will of the King that he, Angelo a very simple, small pilgrim, should keep the Birthday of the Holy Child within the gates of the City Celestial! Oh tidings most rare, most sweet!

It was the gracious will of the King that he—even he—little Angelo! should stand among the

white-robed throng, one of the redeemed children who, their pilgrimage o'er, rest for ever in the Presence of their Saviour! Oh thought most glad, most precious!

His pilgrimage was done. The Narrow Way his little feet had so patiently trodden was ended.

And after all, had it not been a very short way?

> ". . . . What if the bread
> Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
> To meet the flints? At least it may be said,
> Because the way is *short* I thank Thee, God!"

He had not thought to find it so short. Visions of long and weary marches through deserts arid and scorching, and by-ways rugged and bleak, had sometimes vexed his childish soul. It had not always been easy to remember:

"*Sufficient unto the day* is *the evil thereof.*"

And now—quite suddenly—it was all over; the stumbling little feet would stumble no longer, the little heart would never again grow weary. The goal was reached and behind him—only a far memory—stretched the Narrow Way that had once seemed so endless.

"I am so glad to go to the City Celestial," said the little child. "Only—what of the other pilgrims? There is Much Afraid, I do not like to leave her, for she is very timid and has found comfort from my company. And there is my White Lady, whom I love . . . she is often weary. May not these come with me, dear Angel?"

"Each pilgrim must go alone across the great river that separates Time from Eternity," was the solemn answer. "Yet not alone," added the Angel of Love, very gently, "for One is with them who says: *the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God!*"

"The King Himself is with them?" softly questioned Angelo, his young voice awed and quiet.

"Even so. Fear not for your friends, dear child. Much Afraid is already safe within the City Celestial. The Angel of Sleep bore her thither a few hours since, and lying unconscious in the arms of that gentlest messenger of Death she passed without fear over the dark waters. So hath our King provided for her peace, knowing her fearful heart and being ever mindful of

His own. For her whom you call The White Lady, her time is not yet. But even that is not far off . . . her work is well nigh done. And she is strong—strong with the strength of Faith and Purity. You need not fear for her."

So when the Angel of Love lifted this weary little pilgrim into his arms, Angelo was ready to depart to the City Celestial, and the bands that bound him to earth dropped from his baby shoulders as the chrysalis falls from the wings of a beautiful butterfly.

Out from that poor narrow cottage room into the grand starry night, sped the Angel of Love on strong white wings, bearing very tenderly his little fragile burden.

> "Beyond the waste of ruined lives,
> The press of human things,
> Beyond the toil and shadow
> Above the want and woe."

And to the listening, enlightened heart of Angelo came with the fullest chords of triumphant ecstasy, the great voice of Nature—the voice of bird and flower and rippling stream, the voice of every created thing—singing the wondrous

Christmas song—the song of the Great Love Who left his Throne in Heaven to live on earth in the form of a little Child.

"*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*"

> "Hark through the silent night
> Angelic voices swell
> Their joyful songs, proclaim that God
> Is born on earth to dwell."

Mortal eyes may not follow the white-winged flight of the Angel of Love, the last short journey of one little pilgrim. Mortal eyes may not behold "The light that never shone on earth or sea," that light which flows forth in a glorious golden flood from the open gates of the City Celestial. They must droop and grow dim, these mortal eyes, could they gaze but one moment upon the snowy robes of the redeemed children as they throng to greet this little child, who is to be one of their glad number. And the music of those harps of gold? We may never hear it this side of Jordan. No faintest echo of the melody of Heaven can steal across the shadows that divide Time from Eternity.

When morning dawned in the Village of Rest it was told among the pilgrims how one of their number, Angelo, a Prince from the Palace of Pleasure, had, in the silence of the night, while they still slept, passed away across the wide river. And many were sorry when they knew that the bright presence of the frail little comrade they had learned to love, had been removed from among them.

"Though fragile and weak, he was always so full of faith and hope," they said; "his songs would often cheer us on our way."

Only the White Lady did not mourn, for to her, in the silence of dawn, had come a gentle vision—the vision of her child-friend, who, stooping from the arms of the Angel of Love, lightly kissed her quiet brow, and laying one sweet blossom of hope on her pillow, whispered: "*Yet a little while!*"

She stretched out her hand to take his—in vain. She was alone. The vision had quickly—almost instantaneously—faded. Some people might have regarded it as a dream. But with the White Lady, it left a sense of peace and joy

inexpressible. "Yet a little while!" she read aright, "*A little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. . . . Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty : . . . . There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*"

And lo! as she thought of the little friend who had "*gone before*" one touched her on the shoulder, and she turned to see the Angel called Faith who had walked with the child all the way.

"Angelo begged me to come," he gently said. "And I have promised him to stay with you to the end. . . . it will not be far."

With great gladness, she put her hand into that of the Guardian Angel who had led her child-comrade to Heaven.

"Faith is the soul's best companion," she said. "A little child has taught me that lesson. If thou leavest me not, dear Angel, I must surely reach the Celestial City."

And Faith answered: "It is the King's will that I rest with thee, an abiding presence to the end."

So, his short way of life over, Angelo, a little pilgrim, went to spend the Birthday of the Holy Child in the City Celestial.

"Not a shade of darkness there, no sin nor sorrow.
All is Eternal Life and Light."

"Lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. . . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0002488384A